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# **JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND AESTHETICS**

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# On What is "In" and What is "Imputed to" Objects of Interpretation

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PETER LAMARQUE

My principal focus in this paper is on what might be called the metaphysics of interpretation. I am concerned with the kinds of objects towards which interpretation is appropriately directed and the kinds of properties that interpretation identifies. It might be thought at the outset that the enquiry is flawed because there is no single enterprise called interpretation and both the objects and properties involved are multifarious. In fact the varied nature of the objects of interpretation and correspondingly the varied forms that interpretation can take will be one of my central themes. Nevertheless, focusing on cultural artefacts in general and works of art in particular I think there is a legitimate question to be raised which I am inclined to put in a Kantian formulation, namely: how is interpretation possible?

To get an idea of what is at stake in that question and in the metaphysical enquiry that underlies it, let me start with a subsidiary question: What is the relation between the properties of an object and an interpretation of that object? It might seem natural to suppose that any genuine properties of an object are antecedent to any competent interpretation, indeed that the role of the latter is to disclose or bring to light the former. Interpretation, on this view, recovers such properties as are in an object but are not immediately apparent.<sup>1,2</sup> Such a conception is motivated by a realist intuition: things are as they are independently of how they are thought to be. Interpretation aims at truth. A more radical supposition, however, is that at least some of an object's properties, in some cases, are *constituted* by interpretation—they come into being only through interpretation. On this view, interpretation is constructive, helping literally to create objects of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> The motivating intuition here is anti-realist or constructivist. Must there be a conflict between these two intuitions?

A simple solution might be to postulate two species of interpretation, the truth-seeking kind that reveals hidden properties and is essentially a mode of exploration and discovery (call it revelatory interpretation) and the constructive kind that enlarges and offers new perspectives but strictly neither describes an antecedent reality nor aims at truth (call it creative interpretation).<sup>4</sup> To the extent that these are distinct and recognizable species, they conform to different demands we make on interpretation. Sometimes we expect interpretation to tell us what an object is really like, to show us something we have missed about the object; at other times this enquiry can seem altogether too pedestrian for we expect an interpretation to be fresh, original, and imaginative, showing us not hidden facts but new possibilities. Interpretation in musical or dramatic performance provides obvious instances of the latter.

Unfortunately distinguishing these two species of interpretation in itself does little to illuminate the problem originally posed, which is a problem about an object's properties and where, as it were, those properties reside. While it might be true that some interpretation is revelatory and some creative, it is clear, for one thing, that not any creative interpretation is as good as any other. What constrains acceptable interpretations of any kind is surely nothing other than the properties of the object itself. And an object must have some properties in itself—some identity conditions—in order to be identifiable as an object of attention. We demand of creative interpretation not perhaps that it be true of the work but at least that it be true to it. Yet how are we to draw the distinction between what is revelatory and what is creative if we do not already know what properties truly belong to an object? It looks as if the realist intuition cannot simply be abandoned in favour of the anti-realist one, even in the most promising cases. But if the two species of interpretation are applicable to one and same object then merely drawing that distinction will not tell us any more about how properties relate to interpretations.

It seems to me that the distinction between the two kinds of interpretation, with their corresponding intuitions, already presupposes a distinction between different kinds of objects and even different kinds of properties. I want to sketch out a view about those objects and properties, one that I hope can reconcile tensions if not contradictions in our common suppositions about interpretation. I will defend—or at least adopt as a working constraint—the realist intuition about objects, that they are identifiable and possess intrinsic properties independently of interpretation (even if subject to interpretation). But I also will defend a moderate version of creative interpretation allowing that some properties of some kinds of objects are the product of, and are not antecedent to, interpretation.

A few more preliminaries about interpretation. The first is that different kinds of objects invite different kinds of interpretation. We should not assume in advance that every object of interpretation is subject to the same methods of interpretation: a poem, a dream, a distant energy surge in the universe, eccentric behaviour at a party, a cryptic remark, evidence at a murder scene, a Rorschach blot, a quattrocento painting, a Biblical passage, and a judgment of the Supreme Court, might all invite interpretation but the constraints on how an interpreter might proceed cannot be assumed to be the same in the different cases. Secondly, I am inclined to suppose, more controversially, that interpretation cannot proceed, certainly cannot be successful, without prior determination of the *kind of thing* being interpreted. Interpretation in that sense need not go all the way down but in most cases can only begin after a preliminary categorisation. Completely unfamiliar or unclassifiable objects are usually uninterpretable. Thirdly, it is important to retain some kind of distinction between interpretation and description. Interpretation arises only where an object's significance is unclear or not obvious, where there is a need to "make sense" of something.<sup>5</sup> You don't need to interpret my greeting 'Good morning' unless you think it is something other than a greeting.

Let us now return to objects and their properties, beginning with, as it were, "ordinary" objects: plants, animals, planets, mountains. It is common to divide properties

of such objects into two broad classes: intrinsic and relational (or extrinsic). The terms are not clearly defined but the idea of the two classes is reasonably straightforward. Intrinsic properties are those that belong to the object per se, apart from the relations that it stands in with other objects. They are not context-sensitive; being "in" the object they persist from context to context. Some intrinsic properties are essential, without which the object would not be the object that it is, some are non-essential or contingent. Often the difference between essential and non-essential intrinsic properties is explicable in terms of determinable and determinate properties. Extended objects, like the ones mentioned, have spatial properties—size, shape, volume, and so forth—essentially but particular sizes, shapes or volumes only contingently. Properties of objects bearing on their microstructure and the nature of their constituent elements are also intrinsic and might themselves be essential or non-essential.

Relational or extrinsic properties, in contrast, can take different forms. They include simple relations with other objects: next to, bigger than, owned by, parent of. They also include intentional properties, deriving from the attitudes, desires, thoughts and fears they invoke in human beings: desirable, frightening, inspiring, dangerous. A subclass of intentional properties are aesthetic properties, which can be possessed by natural objects as well as artistic artefacts. Aesthetic properties also admit of a relational analysis, relating lower-level perceptual properties of objects and the responses of ideal or appropriate perceivers.<sup>6</sup> In the case of ordinary or "natural" objects only a small, highly restricted, class of relational or extrinsic properties are essential and almost certainly no intentional or aesthetic properties. Kripke, famously, has claimed the necessity of origins for living things, although this might be seen as a consequence of the necessity of constitution, in this case genetic structure. Normally relations that objects stand in to other objects, including the responses they invoke in people, are merely contingent. The objects could retain their identity even if those relations do not hold.

The contrast with cultural objects (and works of art in particular) is striking and illuminating. With natural objects there seems little room for interpretation other than the strictly exploratory or scientific. The intrinsic properties of objects might be hard to discern and might at some level be theory-laden to a high degree but the thought that the properties themselves, as opposed to the characterisation of those properties, might be radically variable relative to human interpretive schemes or actually be constituted by interpretation, as claimed for cultural objects, has little intuitive appeal—except to the most extreme anti-realist. Works of art seem altogether more intimately related to interpretation. As cultural objects they have intentional and relational properties as part of their very core of being. At a fundamental level *how they are* is a function of *how they are thought to be*; without human attitudes, beliefs, desires, emotions or meanings, and in general states of mind that need to be represented, expressed, symbolized, or made sense of, there would be no works of art. Here then are a peculiar species of object wholly dependent on the practices from which they arise, the cultures which give them significance and the individuals for whom they are of interest and value.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, they are *intrinsically* intentional and relational. On the

face of it, then, the distinction between intrinsic and relational properties, paradigmatically attributable to natural objects, cannot apply in any straightforward way to cultural objects.

I want to build on this distinction between natural objects and cultural objects, along with their characteristic properties, both sharpening the distinction and in other respects drawing the two sides together. To avoid further confusion over the use of the word 'object' in both contexts, I will talk of 'objects' on the one hand and 'works' on the other, with the focus on works of art, very broadly conceived, as paradigm instances of cultural objects. For every work there is necessarily a corresponding object, in a sense to be defined; the object constitutes the work but is not identical with it. Thus the statue—a work—is constituted by a piece of marble—an object—but is not identical with that piece of marble. They have different identity conditions. The piece of marble could exist without the statue existing and quite radical changes in the marble, through deterioration and restoration, do not necessarily result in changes in the statue. There could even be *essential* properties of the statue, including being a statue or being a representation of Marcus Aurelius, which are not essential properties of the marble. That very same piece of marble might not have been a representation at all.

So how should we distinguish object and work? I invest the term 'object' with very permissive ontological significance. In the art context, patches of paint, pieces of canvas, colour and line configurations, or pieces of marble are objects; so too are strings of sentences or texts; abstract entities also count as objects, including in the case of music sound-sequence types, of the kind characterised by Jerrold Levinson. I accept that sound-sequence types—as distinct from initiated types—are eternal, so on my view some objects, in this extended sense, are both abstract and eternal. Some objects are naturally occurring, wood, marble; some are human creations, plastic, colour mixes. By 'object', I have in mind something like Arthur Danto's 'mere real thing', although without the extra baggage that comes with his theory. I share with Danto the intuition that the existence of an object, in this sense, or a 'mere real thing', is never sufficient for the existence of a work. Works are underdetermined by their physical or structural properties, or, put more strongly, there are possible worlds where, for any given work in this world, a structurally isomorphic object (or type) exists that is not a work at all or not that work.

What about *works* themselves? Here I am thinking of paintings, etchings; musical works; sculptures; as well as literary, philosophical, or historical works. These are human creations; they depend on human intentions and cultural conditions. They are intentional objects not only because they owe their origins to intentional acts but also because their identity conditions, as I have said, are partly determined by how they are *taken* or *thought to be* by relevant cultural communities. They are essentially relational in the sense that they are essentially embedded in cultural practices. This has strong implications, not always noticed, for their survival conditions. They cease to exist when there is no longer the possibility of their eliciting the appropriate kinds of responses among suitably qualified respondents. When they cease to be identified as works, and cease to be understood, appreciated, and valued as works, they cease to exist as works. This has the surprising consequence that a work might no longer survive even though the object that constitutes the



work has survived. In principle, a painted canvas that once constituted a work of visual art (a painting) could exist even though the work, the painting itself, do longer exists because it has lost its cultural embedding. Similarly a written text could survive even though the literary work it once constituted has been lost.

Let us return to interpretation. I have said that works are underdetermined by their physical properties. Two indiscernible physical objects could constitute radically different kinds of works or perhaps no works at all. So merely confronting a physical object—say, a painted canvas, or a piece of marble—is not enough to ground an interpretation. Too many interpretations are compatible with the mere physical facts to make any meaningful interpretation possible. Only when we know that it is a *work*, indeed a work of a certain kind, do we know how to start the interpretive process. This inclines me to suppose that it is works not objects that are the bedrock of interpretation at least in standard cases. We mustn't be blinded here by the ease with which—given familiar cultural conditions—we are able to identify works as works. That should not lead us to suppose that the work simply *is* the object that we see. To recognize a work as a work—a painted canvas as a painting (i.e. an intentional object conforming to cultural practices)—presupposes a fairly complex cultural background. The only—rather special—sense in which interpretations apply directly to *objects* is the sense in which artists project an interpretation onto an object—perhaps a 'found object'—in order to render it into a work. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that Arthur Danto sees works as functions of interpretations on objects. But Danto's theory does not imply that the interpretations of appreciators are directed at objects rather than works. We have to know both that something is a work and broadly what kind of work it is to begin interpretation.

What about the tension we noticed earlier between the identity conditions of a work being sufficiently robust to provide a stable object of interpretation and the possibility that some properties of works are constituted by, not antecedent to, interpretations? This of course is an instance of the familiar hermeneutic circle. But in distinguishing objects and works we now have better resources for approaching the whole question of what properties belong to a work and what properties are imputed to it through interpretation. Because works are culturally embedded, dependent on and identifiable through cultural practices, they already have intentional and relational properties as part of their very nature (if it didn't sound so paradoxical we might insist, as hinted earlier, that such properties are *intrinsic* to works). Works are, as it were, inseparable from their cultural wrappings, so features of these 'wrappings' can be thought to 'belong to' the works themselves. Thus properties deriving from how works are taken or thought to be can be part of the identifying conditions of works. It is perhaps here that revelatory and creative interpretation come closest together, where the former discloses properties present in a work and the latter generates such properties.

But I don't want to give the impression of too sharp a line that clusters on the one side objects, intrinsic properties, revelatory interpretation and realist intuitions about truth, and on the other side works, intentional properties, creative interpretation and anti-realist

intuitions. The position is a bit more complicated and interesting than that. For one thing there is still room for realist intuitions in talking about works even if they need to be refocused. I have suggested that the identifying conditions of works rest essentially on how they are thought to be so the realist divide between what something is and what it is thought to be does not immediately apply. But once a work has been accepted as such within a relevant cultural practice a kind of realism about its properties is possible. Take Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*.<sup>8</sup> It is part of my thesis that there is nothing intrinsic to the object aspects of the work, i.e. the physical marks, brush strokes and colour configurations, that determine that it is a work at all or a work of a particular kind, far less a representation. That's the underdetermination point. But once categorised as a representation, within a recognizable tradition, then certain basic facts about its depictive qualities are assumed; trivially that it depicts people round a table, for example. Such a fact must be a starting point for interpretation not a product of interpretation. Even further along this line, just because certain properties of works are not obvious to any but the suitably informed does not ipso facto imply they are matters of dispute or subject to mere hypothesis rather than truth or that they are not, in the relevant sense, objectively present as characterising features of the work. An example might be the complex iconography in Western medieval painting. The depiction of saints or allusions to Biblical events or other kinds of symbolism are matters of objective fact, given well-established cultural conventions, even if accessible only through interpretation. This, of course, is revelatory, not creative, interpretation. It seems plain that we can retain certain realist intuitions even when talking of works.

However, the anti-realist intuition that interpretation *imputes* properties, thereby helping to construct works, is of fundamental importance in thinking about works, even if it has little or no role in thinking about objects. Creative interpretation is rooted in artistic practice. First, for example, it is through a species of creative interpretation that an artist endows otherwise inert matter—paint, marble, words, sounds—with intentional properties and thus transforms objects into works. This is the basis for Danto's notion of the transformative power of interpretation, which I alluded to earlier: "Indiscernible objects become quite different and distinct works of art by dint of distinct and different interpretations, so I shall think of interpretations as functions which transform material objects into works of art."<sup>9</sup>

But we can go further, for creative interpretation is not restricted to artists. Critics too can have a transformative role in the appreciation of art; like artists, they too must employ the imagination in their response to art. Creative interpretation must supplement the revelatory kind. It is in the nature of the practice of art that appreciators engage imaginatively with works, projecting fruitful ways they might be seen or heard or read or performed. This is creative interpretation for it is constrained not by truth but by imaginativeness and possibility. The best creative interpretations are those that take the established aspects of works, those elements intrinsic to the works, and find new saliences for them,<sup>10</sup> or new ways of thinking about the work's themes, motifs, or symbolic or figurative aspects.

Does this activity genuinely add to the work or just play games with it? One reason for thinking it does expand the very conception of the work is that works, as intentional objects, bear with them the critical tradition that develops round them. This is partly a consequence of the practice of art, which invites critical engagement, but is also partly connected to the intentional nature of art, whereby, as we have seen, what they are is a function of what they are thought to be. Of course not any creative interpretation establishes a critical tradition. Only the best, most exciting, imaginative, or illuminating do so. But these imputations enlarge a work, they show ways in which indeterminacies can be filled out, they change the way a work is conceived and if they become canonical there is no going back; the work grows into this new conception. What begins as a mere possibility develops into a realisation and this becomes another route from "imputed to" to "in" or "part of".

We have travelled a winding path from our original conundrum about interpretation and the properties of works. But I have left room, I hope, for the insights behind the two apparently irreconcilable positions: that of the realists, who hold that interpretation can only reveal pre-existent properties of works, and that of the constructivists, who hold that interpretations can help construct works. I have wanted to preserve a fairly robust realist notion of works, whose very nature can, I hope without undue paradox, incorporate intentional and relational properties. But in stressing the practice-dependence and intentionality of works, I have also shown them to be crucially different from ordinary objects such that many common assumptions about realism do not apply. It is part of the practice involving these strange objects that in opening up a field of possibilities, and inviting imaginative supplementation and the active search for new saliences and creative readings, there is scope in interpretation for work enlargement and creative imputation, as well as the revelation of what already exists.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> A clear defence of such a view is found in Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); and "The Constructivist's Dilemma," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55:1 (Winter), pp. 43-52; it is also defended in different chapters in Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> The view is presented in Joseph Margolis, "Reinterpreting Interpretation," in *Contemporary Philosophy of Art: Readings in Analytic Aesthetics*, edited by John W Bender & H Gene Blocker (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), pp. 454-70; and in *What, After All, Is a Work of Art?* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999); Michael Krausz defends a similar view in *Rightness and Reasons: Interpretation in Cultural Practices* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Some such distinction is acknowledged in Jerrold Levinson: "Two Notions of Interpretation," in *Interpretation and Its Boundaries*, edited by Arto Haapala & Ossi Naukkarinen (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1999): 2-21; in Eddy Zemach, *Real Beauty* (University Park, PA: Penn State University-Press, 1997), p. 117; and in Peter Jones, *Philosophy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> The point is rightly emphasized by Annette Barnes, *On Interpretation*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> As John Bender puts it (about works of art, although the view is generalisable): 'a work's having an aesthetic property, F, such as grace, power, or starkness, is for it to have some set of (other) features and relations which makes the work evoke in some relevant class of perceivers or critics certain responses and judgments, including the judgment that it is appropriate to call the work F': John W. Bender, "Realism, Supervenience, and Irresolvable Aesthetic Disputes", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 54 (1996), p. 371.

<sup>6</sup> For more details, see my 'Work and Object', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. CII, pt. 2 (2002), pp. 141-162.

<sup>7</sup> This is an example discussed in Michael Krausz, *Rightness and Reasons: Interpretation in Cultural Practices*.

<sup>8</sup> A. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.39.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of interpretation as the assignment of saliences is developed by Michael Krausz in *Rightness and Reason: Interpretation in Cultural Practices*.

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# A Proposal for the Classification of Arts

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ÖMER N. SOYKAN

The main objective of this paper is to propose a method of classifying all arts with respect to certain qualities so that it is possible to observe the realm of art in a systematic framework. We propose that even if there is a kind of art which is not mentioned in the present, such a kind of art can also be included in this classification. Beside this theoretical aim, which is to place all arts in a systematic framework, a practical goal of our classification is to contribute to the teaching of arts and consequently, to the design of educational institutions.

The starting point of our classification is the reception of the subjects when they take an aesthetic stand on works of art. This belief that such ways of reception are given in complete forms, in other words, that the subject does not have other ways of reception, is the basis of the hypothesis that such a classification covers all arts. From this point of view, we first divide arts into two groups: those which are perceptual and those which are conceptual. Then we shall classify each of these divisions and finally create a third group consisting of the perceptual-conceptual arts where both perception and conception are involved. Works of art are perceived either by the sense of hearing or by the sense of sight or by an association of the two senses. For instance, works of cooking or perfumery are not considered works of art because they are addressed to senses of taste or smell.

We first divide perceptual arts into two groups: audible arts and visual arts. Music is purely audible and we shall not divide it further. All kinds of music are the same as far as the way they are perceived is concerned although they may exhibit big differences in other respects.

We divide visual arts into two groups: two-dimensional arts and three-dimensional arts. As the dimensions of objects are given to us through perception, this division fits our point of view. We gather all two-dimensional visual arts in one set, regardless of whether they are painted on a surface or carved or risen. These are calligraphy, miniature, painting, photographing, engraving, relief and ornament. We divide three-dimensional arts into two groups: arts of volume and arts of space. The first group includes sculpture and the second architecture. The main difference between architecture and sculpture is that architecture involves interiors. For instance, a building may look like a church with its outer appearance and size, but if it does not have interiors, in other words, if people are not able to enter it, then it is considered as a work of sculpture and not as a work of architecture. The fact that both the concept of impenetrability and the concept of space are related to sensuality, in other words, that both are perceptual, justifies our classification.

We do not want to engage ourselves in discussing whether works of handicraft such

a discussion of conceptual arts. The basic distinction between perception and understanding relates to the way an object is given to the subject, in other words, to the way a subject perceives the object. As we have been arguing since the beginning of this paper, this is something that constitutes our point of view. Although in the case of perception sensuality is sufficient, in the case of understanding the mind must be involved. For the mind to be involved, sense data must become mental. The function of the mind is to process the data provided by perception. This is why it is a second level reception, the first level being perception. In the case of perception, sensuality is sufficient and the mind does not need to be involved. For instance, when we look at a picture of natural scenery, we directly perceive that this is the representation of a piece of natural scenery, because the painting imitates the piece of scenery and stands in front of us as if it were a real piece of scenery. On the other hand, when we look at a scripture or hear a word, to understand what it means we cannot remain at the level of perception. It is a symbolisation. For instance, the word "tree" is not the imitation of an object but its symbol. We transform this symbol to the object that it represents before perceiving it and create the image of a tree in our mind. On the other hand, in sound words such as "mew" or in sound effects such as that of a thunderbolt, it is the same as in the case of painting: there is no symbolisation but a direct imitation. We name all linguistic arts as conceptual arts because language symbolises and the reception of the symbolised is based on understanding: in other words, it is conceptual. In that case, perception is merely a step before understanding and provides the subject with the object to be understood. Perception is not involved in the stage of understanding.

Conceptual-linguistic arts are divided into two groups: verbal arts and written arts. Verbal arts are based on the sense of hearing and written arts on the sense of sight; in other words, the first level reception of the first one involves hearing, and that of the second sight. Tales, fables, epics (storytelling, chatting) and radio drama are placed in the first set and poetry, stories, novels, text of drama, memoirs, travel notes and letters in the second, i.e. the set of written conceptual arts.

Now we proceed with discussing the third main group we have referred to at the beginning, where perception and conception are combined: the group of perceptual-conceptual arts. Note first of all that each conceptual art is always based on a foundation of perception, i.e. on first level reception because, however conceptual a work of art may be, it is a concrete, perceptible object. In the reception of the kinds of art that we are about to classify, as in the case of conceptual-linguistic arts, reception is not merely a preliminary step; it does not withdraw but always stays at work. In that case, perception and conception always take place simultaneously. We divide these perceptual-conceptual arts into two groups according to the forms of perception they use: visual-conceptual arts and audible-visual-conceptual arts.

Visual-conceptual arts are divided into two groups: stage arts and image arts. The first group includes mime and the second caricature, comic strips and photo stories. We place works of modern dance performed without music together with mime, i.e. in the group of visual-conceptual stage arts if they focus on transmitting an idea. Obviously, in

that case music may have been used as an accompanying element, as a background. What matters is whether music has been used as a structural element or not. In classification, what counts for us is whether an element is structural or not.

As for the audible-visual-conceptual arts, we have the same division: stage arts and image arts. The first one includes puppet show, drama, opera and the second one arts which consist of reflecting momentary images on screen, i.e. shadow plays and films (cinema, TV, video, animation).

The table below illustrates our proposed classification of arts more concisely.

0 Arts									
1 Perceptual			2 Conceptual (linguistic)			3 Perceptual-conceptual			
1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2		3.1		3.2	
Audible	Visual	Audiovisual	Verbal	Written	Visual-conceptual	Audible-visual	conceptual		
*Music		*Dance	*Tales	*Poetry					
x		*Ballet	*Fables	*Stories					
		x	*Epics	*Novels					
			(storytelling, chatting)	*Text of drama					
			*Radio drama	*Memoirs					
			x	*Travel notes					
				*Letters					
				x					
1.21	1.22					3.11	3.12	3.21	3.22
Two-dimensional	Three-dimensional					Stage arts	Image arts	Stage arts	Image arts
*Calligraphy						*Mime	*Caricature	*Puppet show	*Shadow plays
*Miniature						x	*Comic strips	*Drama	*Films
*Painting							*Photo stories	*Opera	(cinema, TV, video, animasyon)
*Photographing							x	x	
*Engraving									x
*Relief									
*Ornament									
x									
	1.221	1.222							
	Arts of volume	Arts of space							
	*Sculpture	*Architecture							
	x	x							

This table also provides definitions of kinds of art. The definition is made by reading the table. To define a kind of art, the routes of the kind of art that are to be defined are followed from the top to the bottom. For instance: "Architecture is an art of space which is included in the group of three-dimensional arts of the visual arts of the perceptual arts."

# Heroic Narratives from Homer to Medieval Japan and France : Cross-Cultural Perspectives

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RAYMOND CORMIER

Coeval with the era of transition from stagnating aristocracy to enterprising military rule, the Japanese literary genre known as *Gunki Monogatari*, war tales, is manifested in accounts loosely based on the Gempei battles, 1180-1185 (Butler 1996). Reflecting, albeit indirectly, the warrior spirit of late Heian and Kamakura times (ca. 1100-1333), these various martial stories boast at least one crown jewel, namely, the "Heke-monogatari" (Tales of the Heike, or of the House of Taira). In thirteenth-century versions both written and transmitted orally—whether following the poetic tradition of Yukinaga, Kamakura, or Kakuichi (Butler 1966)—this traditional heroic narrative describes the rise of the Taira warrior clan and its final and total annihilation by a rival, the Minamoto or Genji family.

Titanic and bloody battle scenes outside the old capital of Kyoto, and exquisitely intimate love episodes at court at once paint a broad picture of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century Japan, and portray the personal and political destiny of families and individuals in virtually all social classes. Even though Butler (1969) has shown how uncertain and complex such assertions may be, this is the time of the emergence of the renowned Bushido code—for one's lord, unconditional, personal loyalty, even if it meant suicide to save face or one's good name (an historically institutionalized last resort); warrior fearlessness and perseverance in the face of either a superior foe or death; contempt for material wealth; and defense of personal and family honor.

In imitation of the "emaki" or artistic and picturesque painted scrolls of the period, which exploit parallel perspectives, this paper aims first to bring into sharper focus the contrasting lifestyles of the elegant medieval Japanese courtier—the so-called *kuge*—and the unsophisticated feudal samurai warrior—also referred to as countrified *buke* or *bushi*. While a cliché and a difficult distinction for some scholars, the divergence yet bears further study. Inspired by the pioneering research by Sasaki along these lines, this brief survey will deal with a few relevant themes related to courtly topoi mindful of Old French romance. It will also highlight some of the varieties of tragic and frustrated love in the *Heike monogatari*, manifested, in my opinion, as artistic devices to delay the inescapable dénouement, i.e., the fall of the house of the Heike—so reminiscent of the fall of Troy. Further, a special explication of a stereotypical sequence in the oral style—the hero's departure for battle—as recounted by Homer and two of his distant imitators, will provide a foil to similar events in the Japanese narrative. I will then take up some illustrations of the ways of the Bushido warrior, focusing mostly on Kiyomori's actions. Occasionally, and merely for reference, parallels from contemporary Japan will be drawn. So that by inference, contrast and comparison, I hope both to highlight the resemblances between Western "courtly" notions and their counterparts



or analogues is Japanese traditions. This effort should thereupon shed light on the courtly tradition in medieval Western Europe.

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In the Heike story's backdrop lie the complex relationships of the aristocratic Fujiwara clan, the latter's long-time control over the Imperial court principally through intermarriages and scheming exploitation of a delicate balance of power between the two leading military families employed as Court bodyguards or militia, and the Fujiwara's twenty-year dependence on the victorious Heike in the aftermath of the *Heiji* Disturbance of 1160, in which the Taira emerged victorious. To further complicate matters, Genji defectors join the Taira leaders to defeat their enemies in the Hogen war, but the Heike cut these very allies down in the Heiji conflict; moreover, interlacing the plot's prolix fluctuations are at least two religious sects of warrior monks known for shifting loyalties and differing Buddhist tendencies.

After 1160, now eliminated, most of the Minamoto were slain; but some descendants were banished to the wilds of the Kanto or Eastern provinces, a single act of *bushi* clemency that the new Prime Minister, Taira Kiyomori, would live to regret ("sentiment before rationality," in March's words, 42-44). For the story represents this merciless tyrant—not unlike the Greek Agamemnon—as a proud and mighty man, given over to "freakish caprices," contumacy and selfishness, that is, a prime candidate for the law of karmic retribution.

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### I. *Courtly topoi and the Varieties of Love:*

Let us enter the heart of the story in Book 4, the "beginning of the end" so to speak, a courtly interlude packed with political implications. It is 1180, and Yorimasa, a distant Genji relative and military leader, tempts Prince Takakura, the 30 year-old future emperor, to stir up sentiment against the Heike. The Prince is gifted, enjoys spring flower games, poetry, fall moonlight banquets, and his own musical compositions for the flute. He is an "old-style" aristocrat whose courtly manners mark him off from upstart *buke* or samurai warriors. Yorimasa arrives at the palace in secret to incite the Prince:

As things stand now, people seem to be going along without a murmur, but there is no living soul who does not secretly resent the Heike. You ought to raise a revolt, crush the Heike, end the distress of the Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, who is shut up in the Toba Mansion for nobody knows how long, and assume the imperial dignity. That would be filial dignity of the highest order [... Two pages follow listing the disaffected Genji warriors lying in wait to rally for the cause....] The Heike and the Genji once played equal roles in subduing court enemies and realizing aspirations for worldly success, but now they are as far apart as clouds and mud: the Genji are isolated, their status even lower than that of vassals... (McCullough 136, 138; Sieffert 170, 171).

Just give the word, he pleads, and thousands will come to serve. Later on, this same Prince (Takakura) dies from a broken heart (Book 6; McCullough 206; Sieffert 257).

Not unlike songs in relation to plot in musical comedy, "The Tale of the Heike"

features a number of compelling episodes that delay the story's inevitable progress. These are often tender love tales which reveal also the ruthless and despotic behaviour of Kiyomori—at its highest, or lowest levels. They also depict an array of human emotions and varieties of love—extramarital and adulterous and passionate, tender and conjugal, filial, divine and spiritual.

One intense example relates that when a certain Lady Aoi—the beloved mistress of the Emperor—learns of scandalous rumors about them, and her princely lover fears a row with his Imperial Spouse, he ceases seeing her. They are separated. He writes a profoundly touching poem, "Despite concealment,/it has appeared in my face—/this longing for you,/so poignant that others ask,/ 'What is preying on your mind?'" (McCullough 201; Sieffert 251)—which he sends to Aoi; who consequently withdraws to her family's home and a few days later dies from love (cf. *messhi hoko*, "destroying the self to serve others," March 55).

Now the Emperor falls into profound remorse: to amuse him, the beautiful zither-playing Kogo, directly from the Imperial Spouse's apartments is sent to dally with him. But it is the Captain of the Guard who loves *her*, pursues her, writes her heartfelt love poetry, which Kogo, now an Imperial mistress, refuses to read. Kiyomori finds out about this whole circumstance (both men in love with Kogo are his sons-in-law) and threatens to put an end to her. Kogo escapes to the country, plunging the Emperor into an even deeper state of uncontrollable weeping from love's torments (one of some 111 textual occurrences!—not surprising actually in the context of *kanashii*, "grief, sadness;" March 66). A fortuitous servant finds her, and eventually Kogo returns briefly and secretly to the Palace, meets with the Emperor, and becomes pregnant. Kiyomori finds out and banishes the 23 year-old to a convent, whereupon the Emperor falls sick and dies from love (McCullough 201-206; Sieffert 251-257).

It will be recalled that jealousy, a lust for unlimited control, and a sense of inadequacy also motivate King Mark in the *Tristan* legend—as Iseut and Tristan himself learn to their great sorrow (Beroul, vv. 554-555, 778-782, 1051-1052, 1126-1128, 1181-1189, etc.; cf. Sasaki, "La *Fin'Amor*").

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In another sketch of love in the midst of war (McCullough 320-324; Sieffert 396-401), a tragic tale of marital love interrupts the battle accounts. It is the story of Lady Kozaiho who drowned herself. She is the pregnant wife of the now slain Michimori, a Heike warrior, who will throw herself into the river upon learning of his death in battle. At night her *interior monologue*—like some inward-looking French romance heroine—goes over his parting words, her painful regret over not swearing to meet with him in the after life... (McCullough 321; Sieffert 397): "[...] I had kept still about being pregnant, but I mentioned it then so he would not think I was making a secret of it. He acted so happy (...)." With tears streaming down her cheeks, her maidservant tries in vain to convince her otherwise, but Kozaiho is resolved, prays and then leaps into the river. Her nurse grieves, then shaves her head, and her attempt to follow her mistress is thwarted by others on board (McCullough 322; Sieffert 399).

A romantic retrospective anecdote closes the chapter (McCullough 323-324; Sieffert 400-401)—about how Michimori fell in love with Kozaisho at first sight: she a Palace lady of honor, he an assistant Majordomo... He sends love letters and poems. Kozaisho refuses to read them, but the Empress finds one and replies to it with a tender, echoing poem on behalf of Kozaisho! And this brings them together, only to be separated in the end by death.

These examples of dramatic self-sacrifice because of love will serve perhaps to illustrate a Japanese version of a type of courtly love, episodes that could easily be adapted, *mutatis mutandis*, to a 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century European vernacular tradition—certainly unexpected in an epic context. However, it is interesting that medieval French romance seems to conclude rather with an uplifting, almost obligatory “happy ending”—a marriage ceremony of love tested and renewed—whereby a defect is corrected or a lack eliminated (Kelly 121-130). The tragic vision of marital love as “noble failure” (Morris 67-105, “Victory through Defeat”) seems uniquely Japanese. In this way, the “Tale of the Heike” implies or suggests the “pathos of things” (*Mono no aware*), apparently a basic aesthetic and emotional building-block of the Japanese mentality (Morris).

\* \* \*

Mention of noble failure arising from overweening pride, retribution and pathos recalls one powerful scene from Homer’s *Iliad* that finds its analogue in this episode involving Kozaisho and her beloved Michimori in the “Tale of the Heike.” I refer to the tearful farewell when the audience knows the hero will not return home alive (*Iliad* VI.237 ss.)—fraught with gestures of human touching.

Hector returns briefly from the raging battle and tells Hecuba to pray and sacrifice fervently to the “great grim goddess” Athena for intercession (the Trojan is the “city-protector” and the goddess’s divine counterpart, *par excellence*, according to Nagy 114-115). Hector then visits Paris to call him back to arms.

Touching, terrible and tragic spring to mind as one witnesses, Andromache pressing close to Hector, “Weeping freely” and clinging to his hand. She urges him to remain, calls him reckless and pitiless, and appeals to his honor as a husband. For she, Andromache, has lost mother, father, and seven brothers by the hand of enemy “godlike” Achilles (415-428).

You, Hector—you are my father now, my noble mother/a brother, too.  
and you are my husband, young and warm and strong!! Pity me, please!”  
(429-300).

Hector recalls to her his *raison d’être*—glory and honour, personal and familial—and also especially the desire to preserve Andromache’s freedom and spare her from the bonds of slavery (440-461). He refuses to skulk from war. Then Hector goes to raise his son up—however frightened and cringing Astyanax may be from fear of the father’s bronze helmet—kisses him and “tossed him in his arms” (478), praying to Zeus to insure the boy a life of strength, bravery and fame. Hector places the boy in his wife’s arms and, “filled with pity now,” he “stroked her gently” (485), boasting of his own bravery, reminding her both of the inescapability of destiny and of her spousal and womanly duties. Whereupon he leaps back into the fray.

Several centuries later, Dares the Phrygian (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D.), whose work, "The Trojan War", or "History of the Destruction of Troy," belongs to what scholars refer to as the epigonal Homeric Cycle, describes this same scene in dry but swift and dynamic terms: Andromache is haunted by a prophetic dream that Hector should not go to fight. She takes action by alerting Priam, who restrains Hector. But the Trojan hero reproaches her bitterly for this and demands she bring forth his armor. In a state of mourning, holding the baby Astyanax, she begs Hector to remain, who only becomes more frustrated as Priam holds him back—but only very briefly (Fry 268-269).

In the midst of the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century in Western Europe, one Benoit de Sainte-Maure composed his *Roman de Troie*, based on both Dares and Dictys as authentic sources for this innovative romancer. For this particular scene (vv. 15263-16316), Benoit takes those few comments from his "eye-witness" Dares and amplifies them considerably, turning it into a major section surrounding the "Tenth Battle" (out of a total of twenty three). Characterization and verbal expansion allow him to depict an irrational Andromache, an unreasonable and stubborn Hector, and an exasperated Priam.

For Benoit, when Andromache attempts to hide the hero's arms, Hector curses her: "Andromacha het e manace" (v. 15454), and she hurries to place the child at his feet with an imprecation, 'Cruels de cuer, lous enragiez' (15477 :Cruel-hearted, enraged wolf). Once importuned by her, Priam literally stops Hector in the street, who dares not to disobey his father (15579). But fate's wheels churn and the terrible Trojan losses beckon Hector back to the battlefield, and ultimately to his death.

The farewell episode of Kozaishe and Michimoriis intended to illustrate—yet again—the unjustness of Kiyomori's unscrupulous policies. But for Homer and his adapters, the lesson to be drawn is rather how fate affects human affairs and forces us to act according to its whims.

\* \* \*

## II. *The Warrior's New Ways-Practical and Disciplined*

As a supposedly ideal example of the Bushido code in action (at least perhaps in his own mind), Kiyomori the Heike disdains opulent aristocratic ways. His own father Tadamori was a model of secular courtesy and elegance (McCullough 24-25; Sieffert 34-35), but Kiyomori had other interests: he actually took religious vows in hopes of finding intercession for his poor health. In the following (interpolated) passage, he reflects on the hypocritical religious character of his eldest son and successor, Shigemori, which leads to thoughts of how the aristocratic lifestyle is corrupting the boy:

His brothers and children were beginning to ape the aristocrats: they had grown to love luxurious living, were immersed in all manner of elegant refinement; made an ornamental pastime of their religion, kneeling at their prayers with painted faces and eyebrows, and their teeth dyed black.[...] Kiyomori had no objections to elegance and refinement. They were thoroughly desirable. Life was richer for them. As for religion—even he

had taken the vows. Not by any means did he approve of the disbeliever, but this aping of the aristocrats and this travesty of religion—he would have none of it. [...] (Yoshikawa 557).

The above quotation implies that Kiyomori only half-enjoyed his new-found authority and his preponderant influence on the throne. But yet, it had been observed that during the previous era,

[...] a warrior occupying Kiyomori's post at Court would have scandalized the nobles and created hostility. Kiyomori's confident bearing, too, reflected the change. He was the new era; no decision could be made without him, or regarded as final without his consent. The warrior class, in short, had come into power, and Kiyomori's word was absolute in the conduct of state affairs (Yoshikawa 409).

Nevertheless, as the saying goes, "the proud and arrogant endure for only a short while" (Morris 72).

\* \* \*

Not unexpectedly in "The Tale of the Heike" battle scenes are endless often repetitive. Trading rough insults and mockeries face-to-face, warriors typically seek heroic glory. Of a certain Sato, a wounded warrior, his leader asks:

[...] How do you feel...?' 'This will be all for me.' 'Is there anything that makes you feel reluctant to go?' 'There is nothing. I regret only that I must die without seeing my lord rise to prominence. For the rest, he who wields bow and arrow must expect to perish by an enemy shaft...' [...] (McCullough 365; Siellert 457-459).

Recalling Butler's happy phrase for oral formulaic themes "a special aura of authenticity" (1969:106),—how appropriate this fatalistic, half-reluctant "coping strategy" (March 50-54) is to the warrior mentality—demonstrated as well by appeal to Roland's similar petitions in the *Chanson de Roland*—

We must make a stand here for our king:/One must suffer hardships for one's lord/And endure great heat and great cold, / One must also lose hide and hair./Now let each see to it that he employ great blows./So that bad songs not be sung about us!' (*Roland* 1009-1014 : 'Ben devuns ci ester pur nostre rei:/Pur son seignor deit hom susfrir destreiz/E endurer e granz chalz e granz freiz. /Sin deit hom perdre e del quir et del peil./Or quart chascuns que granz colps i empleit/Que malveise cancon de nus chantet ne seit !')

Yet, endless contradictions reveal human weakness in living up to the Bushido code to the fullest. Examples of clearly non-heroic behavior include: hiding in a crevice so to be able to shoot at a mounted horse's belly and unhorse the enemy (McCullough 370);

Sieffert 463): telling a falsehood to convince a Heike chieftain to surrender (McCullough 371; Sieffert 464-465); brutally slaughtering an eight-year old son of a warrior in the presence of his nurse (McCullough 390-392; Sieffert 485-487); and butchery of the innocents (i.e., Heike children and youths) drowned or buried; while the older ones were stabbed or choked to death (McCullough 409-410; Sieffert 511).

### III. Conclusions

Perhaps the most heart-rending of all is the final act just alluded to, relating the end of twelve-year-old Lord Rokudai (McCullough 409-425; Sieffert 511-529). This is Kiyomori's great-grandson, who is suspect because of Genji connections...

First the boy's grief-stricken and anguished widowed mother laments— (McCullough 410-411; Sieffert 512-513):

Now a days, the authorities are assembling Heike children and putting them to death in different ways—drowning, burying, squeezing, and stabbing. I wonder what method they will use to kill my son. He is rather grown up, so they will probably behead him.[...] Rokudai has never left my side from the moment of his birth. His father and I reared him together morning and evening, happy to possess so rare a treasure; and after I suffered the grievous loss of the one on whom I relied, it was my two children who became my consolation. Now only one remains to me; the other has gone. What shall I do after today? During these past three years, night and day, I lived in terror of what has just happened, yet I never expected it so very soon as today. [I prayed to the gods of mercy...] to protect the boy, but now, alas, he has been taken. He is probably dead already'. So she ran on, shedding endless tears.

Soon, Rokudai enjoys a momentary reprieve.... A holy monk intercedes and his life is spared for a time, but the boy, having withdrawn to become a monk himself, is nevertheless executed in the end—because it was believed that while “his head was shaven, his heart was not” (*il a beau avoir rasé sa tete, il n'aura point rasé son coeur!*—Sieffert 528; McCullough 425: “Although he may have a shaven head, he is no monk at heart”).

This was the last barbaric act for final revenge by the Genji. All living evidence of the Heike line has now been exterminated.

\* \* \*

The contrasts we have observed between aristocratic *kuge* and unsophisticated *bushi* provide a convincing matrix for the short narratives studied—assorted love stories that delay the plot and tell of fornication, adultery, procuring, devoted marital love and love's self-sacrifice. The lifestyles limned show the tragic consequences of being a relative or a subject of Kiyomori and expecting to lead a normal life without interference or capricious prohibitions. Even though some possibility of anachronism exists by reading later Tokugawa values into an essentially high medieval text, the Bushido warrior code is operating in the Heike narrative—to a degree. Yet it is also contradicted, too.

As suggested, redolent of elevated Homeric style (i.e., large doses of stereotypical scenes, contrasting and formulaic themes and motifs), the lyrical prose narrative of these pages, gilded with flamboyant but graceful descriptions and with elegant *haiku*-like pauses, nonetheless seem in effect to portray history, or at least the irresistible *recyclage* of human events, as the real protagonist, even while savoring the cosmic finale of grisly revenge for the innumerable and unpardonable Heike abuses of authority.

In spite of the often excruciating, often uninhibited content, lilting Japanese poetic rhythms infuse this saga's aesthetic beauty and hasten the vigorous action and dazzling adventures. It is no wonder that Kubuki theater, contemporary popular culture and film in Japan continue to preserve these diverse narratives and swash-buckling characters.

In the end, the profound story ends elegiacally as a sort of apology for that Imperial favorite, Kiyomori himself, depicted nevertheless as an unrefined, vicious, and defiant brute, into whose calamitous life are woven moralistic threads of Buddhists hues, emphasizing the vanity and futility of human endeavor, regret for the brevity of the old warrior rule, but still stressing unequivocally that in these ceaseless convulsive conflicts, those who had become weak and soft must step down, and that history ultimately would belong to the strong.

Indeed, banishment to the rural provinces actually provided an opportunity for Kiyomori's enemies, the Genji clan, to gather their still-loyal forces and mount a massive and humiliating counter-attack, which doubtless led to their success in a decisive naval battle in 1185 (recounted in Chapter 11), in which many warriors, courtiers and nobles died, including Kiyomori's own wife, and also the eight-year old emperor, Antoku, Kiyomori's grandson, who drowned in his grandmother's arms.

Thus does war degrade human beings and overweening lust for power becomes fatuous. Yet, the hero Kiyomori, perhaps meant to be viewed as a victim of the times, rose to glorious vigor just as the newer elements of Confucianism and Zen Buddhism were emphasizing practical experience and discipline—as opposed to earlier Heian excesses, though not, one supposes, in garish atrocities (Spae 29-31). The same trend may be seen in the *emaki* painted scrolls. The Kamakura Period witnessed a diversity of style, combining traditional and new warrior values, as the purely decorative gave way to the descriptive, romantic themes became more realistic, and one notes a greater stress on “individuality and objectivity” (Okudaira 100-101).

Though Kiyomori dies much earlier (actually in Chapter Six!), the towering figure of heroic passions (or at least his tyrannical policies)—occasional Confucian benevolence notwithstanding—finally meets his terribly ironic come-uppance on the sea at Dan-no-Ura, scene of death for thousands of souls. Kiyomori's harsh and inhuman methods lead to extinction of all hopes and dreams for the Heike clan. The “strange bedfellow” is ousted by the Genji, who themselves, in less than a century, would be dislodged from power. And so it goes, as the eternal struggle—*la lutte éternelle*—continues its course...

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# The Fragility of the Self in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.*

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In perhaps the most poignant passage Freud ever wrote, he comments on the vulnerability of the ego, betrayed from within and without:

We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Had Freud had even a trace of the oceanic feeling he claimed to know only by report, he might have added to his catalogue the anguish occasioned by God's disappearance; further, feminist critics would insist on acknowledgement of the particular hardships borne by their gender, so long endured they have come to seem nearly inevitable. But however one amends Freud's list, what does seem clear is that his general estimation of the almost hopelessly beleaguered self might stand as an epigraph over most twentieth century fiction – from Joyce's creation of Leopold Bloom who endures in a single day the buffets Ulysses underwent in a decade, to Kafka's Joseph K. arrested without apparent cause and ultimately executed "like a dog," to Handke's Tormann bewildered by even the simplest human intercourse. All this is to say, then, that the fragility of the self central in both Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* is not a theme unique to these authors, by any means.

What is strikingly similar, however, about the fictional worlds of Woolf and Wolf is, first of all, their almost dizzying fluidity. The external world, largely an alien place, is recorded as ongoing montage, incapable of lending any kind of steady orientation. And once such a Heraclitean reality is posited, the most essential question one can raise is why an individual should see the things in the particular way he does. Though the problem of knowledge is of importance for both authors, psychology is clearly more central than epistemology. What this means more specifically is that character takes shape primarily in

the ever shifting and unreliable memory of other characters. In both works the resurrection of the protagonists in memory takes place many years after the "actual" Christa T. and Mrs. Ramsay have died, just at the point, in fact, where they were about to sink into oblivion, and in both cases the resurrection, occurring in response to a deeply rooted need, works some profound change upon the rememberer. By coming to terms with these characters in memory alone, then, where they are subject to the desire of the living, both Lily and the narrator of *Nachdenken* create a form of alter ego. (Indeed, there are clues that perhaps there is no character Christa T. separate from the narrator, but that both represent dual aspects of one personality). Thus, more than a desire to understand the "other," this coming to terms with the dead is really just another way of getting to know a heretofore lost or buried aspect of the self. Both Christa T. and Mrs. Ramsay are conjured up because they are "needed" to overcome the stagnation caused by an emotional block too long ignored. They serve as catalysts for the *Trauerarbeit* to which Christa T.'s narrator and Lily must submit before repressed emotions can emerge and psychic harmony be reestablished.<sup>2</sup>

And not just Lily and the narrator of *Nachdenken*, but the authors themselves are submitting in these works to some kind of *Trauerarbeit*. Virginia Woolf made it quite plain in her diaries that *To the Lighthouse* was for her a way of dealing with the memories of her parents and early childhood,<sup>3</sup> something she was compelled to write, while Christa Wolf made no secret of the highly autobiographical nature of *Nachdenken* and left little doubt that Christa T. represented, among other things, a long repressed aspect of herself.<sup>4</sup> Yet, whereas Christa Wolf, the author, confronts in her character, Christa T., the dormant aspect of her own self directly and spares neither herself nor her narrator the fear and anguish associated with such soul-searching,<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf avoids this direct confrontation by almost completely suppressing the narrative voice in her work. This avoidance of "sentimentality," as she calls it, allows her to distance herself from the emotional hazards of that enterprise by projecting her emotions onto Lily Briscoe, a character who in the first half of the novel plays almost too minor a role to be endowed later on with the important task of *Trauerarbeit*, giving Mark Spilka cause to speak of "Lily Briscoe's Borrowed Grief."

Freud, in his burrowing through layers of psychic material, likened the work of the psychoanalyst to that of an archeologist, a student and excavator of the long forgotten, buried past, someone capable not only of restoring the past but of making it again viable for the present. Even if Christa Wolf had not acknowledged her indebtedness to Freud, especially to his theory of repression and the unconscious, her method of writing, or more precisely of "assembling" the character of Christa T. by using snippets of Christa T.'s writing to rekindle the narrator's memory of forgotten experiences and impressions, and by relying on the imagination to fill in memory gaps, can be seen to parallel in many ways the Freudian method of analysis and bears testimony to his influence.<sup>7</sup> Nelly, a character in her novel *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), speculates what would happen "wenn wir den verschlossenen Räumen in unseren Gedächtnissen erlauben würden, sich zu öffnen und ihre Inhalte vor uns auszuschütten."<sup>8</sup> This speculation so clearly articulated in this later work, was already put into effect in *Nachdenken*, where the narrator does just that, break open "die verkapselten

Höhlen...[im] Gedächtnis".<sup>9</sup> not just her own caves, but also Christa T.'s to get at the essence of the self. Writing and remembering as a form of self-awareness in *Nachdenken* thus takes place on three levels, that of the author, that of the narrator and that of the character, Christa T., whereby it isn't at all clear which of the three constitutes the primary self, which the reflections.<sup>10</sup>

Though Virginia Woolf's own Hogarth press published "all Dr. Freud" and she was acquainted with Alix Strachey and others who had submitted to analysis, she did not share Christa Wolf's obvious affinity for psychoanalytic theory.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, when she came to reflect years later how writing *To the Lighthouse* had freed her from the obsessive, haunting memories of her parents, she likened this creative process to a kind of psychoanalytic purging: "I suppose I did for myself what psychoanalysts do for their patients."<sup>12</sup> Similar ambivalence about psychoanalysis reveals itself in her approach to writing. She rejects as ungentle the Joycean style "stream of consciousness" that supposedly paralleled closely the Freudian method of free association because it seemed to her "conscious and calculated."<sup>13</sup> Instead she prefers her own method of feeling about "in a state of misery," allowing unconscious material to emerge gradually by waiting until "one touches the hidden spring."<sup>14</sup> which suggests a somewhat more spontaneous excursion into the unconscious. Yet when we learn that her "tunneling" into the past is done in order to "dig out *beautiful caves*"<sup>15</sup> [italics mine] behind her characters, the implicit censoring of unconscious material makes Woolf's criticism of Joyce more applicable to herself. This becomes especially apparent if we consider how hard she tries to keep her writing impersonal and free of anything that could be construed as "sentimental" when dealing with the very personal topic of *To the Lighthouse*. The result of this conscious check Woolf puts on the flow of unconscious processes is that only Lily is granted a glimpse of her libidinal impulses, while the deeper, more complex aspects of her other characters remain largely hidden, not just from themselves, but from the reader and, we suspect, the writer as well. Similar to Woolf, then, but for quite different reasons, Woolf's fictional selves too, can only be unearthed with extraordinary effort. But, in the end, when at last discovered, they, too reveal themselves to be radically intersubjective – "the caves ...connect."<sup>16</sup>

With all this as a means of establishing the basis for a comparative study of the two novelists, let us look more closely at, first, *To the Lighthouse*. In doing so we are immediately struck by the fact that there is a further, overarching metaphysical problem which militates against arriving at and maintaining a sense of self: Virginia Woolf's godless universe seems absolutely indifferent to human endeavours.

Did nature supplement what man advanced? Did she complete what he began? With equal complacency she saw his misery, his meanness, and his torture. That dream, of sharing, completing, of finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was than but a reflection in a mirror, and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath?<sup>17</sup>

Although none of the characters ever describes the problem in these bald, Nietzschean

terms, almost all of them are vitally concerned with escaping the general flux of time, and hence oblivion, by creating something of permanence that will outlive them: Mr. Ramsay (as well as his young protégé Charles Tansley) would like to secure for himself a bit of eternity by attaining fame with his scholarly books; Lily Briscoe wishes that she might create the kind of art that would stand in the future as a testimony to the creative powers of her maligned gender; Mrs. Ramsay struggles constantly to stay the hand of time by creating small moments of peace, harmony and happiness that would endure in the memory of those she had taken under her wing; while Mr. Banks fears he may have neglected investing in his own immortality by not having married or fathered by children. Often, however, the battle against time appears so one-sided that paralysis sets in. Mr. Banks, in resignation, concedes "Who could tell what was going to last – in literature or anything else?" (161). Mr. Ramsay, typically pushing the point further, seeks refuge in the speculation that even the greatest of spirits will all ultimately be enfolded in silence, and he is driven to take a perverse delight in contemplating that an insignificant pebble would "outlast Shakespeare" (56). Mrs. Ramsay herself, the most resilient of the characters, is badly thrown off stride by the sudden notion that a friend whom she has not thought of for many years may similarly have forgotten her existence: "the thought was strange and distasteful" (132).

As a result of this inevitable erasure of characters' best efforts to leave behind their signature on the world, reality appears as strangely chiaroscuro, a kind of "lighthouse," where phases of darkness and illumination, self-assuredness and insecurity, emotional highs and lows are in constant, rapid pursuit of each other, making certainty ever elusive. Regardless, therefore, how secure and optimistic we might seem at any given moment, how harmoniously in tune with our environment, an awareness of nature's more sinister underside is almost certain to break through, shaking our confidence and reminding us, as it does Mrs. Ramsay in contemplating the monotonous ebb and flow of the waves on the beach, of the destruction, decay and death that constitutes the culmination of even the happiest and the most illustrious of lives (27, 8). In response, Woolf's characters maintain their precarious psychic balance only by falling from one emotional extreme into another. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay who is angry with her husband for his insensitive remarks to James that seem to her "so horrible an outrage of human decency" (51), is immediately soothed by his show of humility, convinced that "there was nobody she revered more. She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings" (51). Yet, again, just before the big dinner, she "could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or affection for him" (125). And not just Mrs. Ramsay, but other characters, too, are caught up in similar vacillations. Mr. Banks, for example, who on the lawn with Lily seemed nostalgic for family life and all aglow with love for Mrs. Ramsay, goes through a phase at dinner where he is suddenly convinced that "he did not care a straw for her" (135) and that "the truth was, he did not enjoy family life" either (134). Similarly, the socially unacceptable Charles Tansley feels so intimidated that he could blow the whole dinner table "sky high," but is miraculously soothed by a kind word from Lily (139). And perhaps the most remarkable case is Lily herself, who at one moment is extremely annoyed that Mr. Ramsay should demand pity from her, but at the next moment so "tormented with sympathy for him" that she is moved to tears (231).

Because of this tremendous volatility, it becomes difficult for us as well as the characters to say which aspect constitutes their "real" self. "Real" seems to be whatever one feels at any given moment, for consistent with the image of the lighthouse that can offer only a mere glimpse of the world at a time, but never the whole picture all at once, each character's perception of himself and the world is restricted to whatever phase he is in at the moment. It is therefore no contradiction that Mrs. Ramsay, who is constantly "searching" to "brighten" the lives of others, should identify her considerate and self-sacrificing "public" self with the bright beam, "the long, steady stroke" of the lighthouse, while associating at the same time her private self, hidden from public view, with the "wedgeshaped core of darkness" that constitutes the lighthouse's other phase(97).<sup>18</sup> What is so striking and psychologically interesting about Virginia Woolf's treatment of her characters is that neither aspect is given clear predominance, leaving each character aware only of the phase he or she is in at a given moment, while the other phase becomes obscured, momentarily removed not just from consciousness, but also from the view of others, ready to resurface and become again conscious in an instant. As a result, it is impossible for the novel's characters to relate their emotional highs and lows or to gain genuine insight into the totality of their being. A true sense of wholeness, a strong sense of self can therefore never be attained. The best one seems to be able to do, if the inherent contradiction of one's existence, the constant vacillation, becomes too much to bear, is either to surround oneself with people whose disposition and temperament complements one's own, or to muster all one's creative energy by shifting, as does Mrs. Ramsay, the balance in favor of the bright side of life. For an artist, like Lily, there exists the third possibility of trying to capture that totality of being in a work of art.

Of these three ways a striving for wholeness, the achievement of what one might call "harmony through association" is perhaps the most common. All characters submit to this mode at least some of the time. Again, Mrs. Ramsay stands out as the prime example, capable as no other of being many things to many different people. Her male admirers, including her husband, see in her primarily an embodiment of all that which they themselves lack: a sense of healthy physicality, emotionality and yielding in the case of the mentally rigid and scholarly Mr. Ramsay; the warmth of motherhood and family life so desperately desired by the lonely, aging and nostalgic Mr. Bankes; and for the young and not yet fully formed Charles Tansely a kind of mother/lover, a transition figure combining all of the security of the former with the promise of all the excitement of the latter. In other words, though Mrs. Ramsay seems the antitheses of them, she really represents the other, complementary half of her masculine admirers, providing their fragmented selves with that healthy sense of wholeness they so desperately need for psychic harmony and balance, while, no doubt, emerging similiarly restored herself.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, however, the achievement of inner harmony by association cannot bring any lasting satisfaction to those who demand a higher degree of permanence, a more lasting escape from self-doubt.

Though committed to a very different medium and concerned with a very different result: in their desire to achieve some sense of permanence, perfection and beauty in a highly divisive, ephemeral world, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily are kindred spirits, artists both.

Furthermore, Lily in her attempt to paint the portrait, is plagued by many of the same problems that beset Mrs. Ramsay. For the question confronting the conscientious hostess, how to reconcile abrasive guests and mend the social fabric, is really just another version of the one facing the artist, "how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left," and as such is a problem of composition (82f). Yet, where Mrs. Ramsay's *pièce de résistance*, her magnificent dinner, is an immediate triumph, Lily's painting of Mrs. Ramsay has to wait ten years for completion. Guided by the sensitivity and intuition that is a kind of hallmark of Virginia Woolf's women, Mrs. Ramsay succeeds because she can not only recognize the impediments to harmonious human interaction but can also muster the necessary skill and determination required to restore the disintegrating social fabric, if only for a moment. Undaunted by her own negative frame of mind she takes her cue from her reluctant guests, braces herself against the currents that are always against her: "Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (126). Her skill then as a great artist of life, her ability to rescue others from their phase of darkness, owes primarily to her ability to know and overcome her own negative side, to go against what would appear to be, for the moment at least, her "real" self.

In her initial attempt to paint the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, Lily is plagued by some of the same problems that beset Mrs. Ramsay in her role as social arbiter (82f). More than just the technical question of composition, however, the problem seems to inhere in the subject of Mrs. Ramsay herself, more specifically, in the complexity of Mrs. Ramsay's character as it manifests itself in her simultaneous roles of mother, lover, wife, friend, and of course, role model for Lily. By insisting that "a shadow here" required "a light there" (81), Lily seems to sense intuitively that a truthful rendition of a subject would have to be more than an accurate representation of its beautiful surface, would have to get to the essence of its inner being as well: "What was the spirit in her, the essential thing, by which...you would have known [her]" (76). In other words, an accurate rendition of Mrs. Ramsay would have to give an impression not just of her various public personae, but also of her private self. Yet, unlike Mrs. Ramsay whose chameleon-like ability to be many things to many people owes primarily to the fact that she can easily insinuate an aspect of her multifaceted self into whatever void she might perceive in others, (dispelling thereby the mystery that others present by understanding them as just another aspect of herself), Lily is not yet capable of such psychological feats. In fact, she is aware of only two somewhat irreconcilable aspects of her own personality, the single, sexually inexperienced woman and the artist, neither of which seem to be able to find resonance in Mrs. Ramsay. Furthermore, since Lily's fear of sexuality stands in the way of her exploration of her own inner being and the forces that lurk there, she remains virtually ignorant of the darker aspects of the human personality in general. As a result, not even her imaginary attempt to gain access to the "cave" that represents Mrs. Ramsay's private, sexual being by burying her head in the lap of the beloved object can bring any results. For the understanding of sexual love that Lily seeks, the knowledge that is "intimacy itself," (79) cannot be achieved through

non-sexual physical contact or mental projection into the beloved object, cannot be "shared" vicariously like Mr. Bankes' infectious rapture of a Madonna-like Mrs. Ramsay reading to her son (73, 4). One can only identify successfully with those aspects of another that one can recognize within oneself. Being quite aware of the darker side of her own nature, Mrs. Ramsay, for example, is quick to recognize it in others and responds intuitively by drawing them back into the light, even if it means she has to overcome a similarly negative mood within herself. Lily however, tends to dismiss out of hand whatever negative thoughts, especially about Mrs. Ramsay insinuate themselves into her consciousness (be it a suspicion of pity underlying her altruism (128), a recognition of her meddlesomeness (78), or acknowledgement of her fading beauty (127)).<sup>20</sup> Clinging to the image of Mrs. Ramsay's unworldly perfection, "that she was unquestionably the loveliest of people... the best perhaps" while ignoring the insistent little voice of doubt that completes her thought: "and different too from the perfect shape which one saw there" (76), Lily is no more capable of relinquishing the lopsided view of such an adored subject, than she is able to confront the hidden aspects of her own personality. Consequently, she will continue to regard her fine sensitivity and intuition as diabolic interference rather than as an asset to her art:

She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. It was in that moment's light between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself – struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: "But this is what I see: this is what I see," and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her. (32)

Were Lily able to trust her intuition, she would know that her depiction of Mrs. Ramsay as "a triangular purple shape" (81) comes much closer to capturing that "wedged-shaped core of darkness" that is her earthy essence than her idealized perception of her as the more perfect "shape of a dome" (80).

It is thus predictable that Lily cannot solve the riddle of her painting by the simple mechanical device of "moving the tree to the middle" (128). She would have to understand precisely what that would signify in terms of her own life. The problem is especially acute for Lily, since unlike the other characters who all at some point are convinced their separate minds "connect," are subsumed into a larger whole, and "move to the same profound rhythm,"<sup>21</sup> she is essentially isolated, left without any external source of identification. Unable to locate a kindred soul whose darker side would allow her to acknowledge her own, it is not surprising that she has made no headway in her life or her art when she reappears ten years later. In fact, Lily now seems emotionally dead, not touched in the least by the death of Mrs. Ramsay and her two children.

The one advantage this older Lily does have, however, is that the physical absence of Mrs. Ramsay forces her to seek her in the recesses of memory where her "demons" wander more freely. But after ten years of emotional dormancy, the descent into the cavernous depth of the mind does not come easily. In fact, before Lily can face the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay even in the safety of her memory, the place where the dead are "at our mercy" (260), she needs to become emotionally resensitized, or "unstuck." Here it is Mr. Ramsay who provides the necessary thrust by forcing her into a Mrs. Ramsay-type role with his unspoken demand for sympathy, much as Mrs. Ramsay had forced her once before to speak the magic word that would soothe the outrage in Charles Tansley. Unlike that earlier time, however, Lily seems now unable to "fake it" and is furious with the absent Mrs. Ramsay whom she blames for this unbearable situation. Negative as it might seem, however, (and the consensus of interpretation is that this is something that presents an obstacle to Lily's coming to terms with Mrs. Ramsay) this is actually a healthy anger, for it is the first time that Lily dares express her repressed emotions and acknowledge them freely, without guilt. This in turn allows her to act spontaneously, to respond to Mr. Ramsay's need by praising his boots, a seemingly absurd gesture, but not if we remember that boots had always been one of Mr. Ramsay's favorite subjects. Immediately, this instinctive response has the effect of restoring Mr. Ramsay, while opening the floodgates of Lily's own repressed side. "Tormented" suddenly "with sympathy for him" (230), it is the first time in her life that she consciously experiences anything akin to passion and acquires thereby an important part of that knowledge she was seeking through identification with Mrs. Ramsay.

Having thus become "unstuck" and aware of her other, buried side, Lily feels "curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there ... the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly on the ground" (234). But as she turns to work on the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, she finds herself losing "consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance" (238). Using her art now not as a surrogate for life, but a vehicle for self-discovery, she submits to the chaos of her mind that "kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues" (238). In the process fact and fiction, memory and invention become indistinguishable, but it doesn't seem to matter, for Lily realizes that: "this making up scenes about them is what we call 'knowing' people, 'thinking' of them, 'being fond' of them!" (258). Nevertheless, Lily discovers that not all the uncensored images which bubble up are positive, and yielding to this "truth," she takes a gleeful delight in Mrs. Ramsay's fading beauty and her failed match-making between Paul and Minta. Having thus finally had the courage to bring the image of her adored subject down to earth, Lily is similarly able to acknowledge what she had previously considered the flawed nature of her own physicality. A Dionysian vision of natives dancing around a bonfire reveals to her that her fear of sexuality conceals a passionate desire for the scorching love of Paul Rayley. It is only then, awakened to the reality of sexual desire, that she can see Mrs. Ramsay through the eyes of a man who loved her – Mr. Banks. She recalls that he once described Mrs. Ramsay as a stunning and as yet



unmarried beauty of nineteen wearing grey, and Lily, who has always, with her painterly eye, taken colour to represent essence, seizes on this greyness of Mrs. Ramsay (264). Gradually, it seems to dawn on her that a true sense of self might be attained not by trying to play off against one another disparate areas of light and dark, balancing a mass here with a mass there, but simply by union of the extremes. Having once acknowledged this, she records it artistically with a bold stroke in the center of her canvas, emblematic of her strenuously achieved sense of self.<sup>22</sup> It is doubtful, however, that this small moment of triumph signals a new steady state of awareness, for it was the result of a "vision" that Lily puts behind her as soon as she lays down her brush.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas in Virginia Woolf's world the sense of self requires daily renewal, and may take those who find themselves outside the mainstream, such as Lily, half a lifetime to achieve even momentarily, Christa Wolf's nonconformist, Christa T., appears, at first glance, to have nothing of this problem. When the narrator encounters Christa T. as a new pupil in her class, she is immediately impressed with her cool self-assurance, sublime indifference and quiet, preemptory manner. Her superiority is beyond question when it becomes apparent that she can control even the teacher and actually determined what the class was to talk about. The relaxed self-confidence of this outsider sets her apart from the others, while her moral incorruptibility throws generally accepted assumptions into question. Thus her mere presence opens the narrator's eyes to other possibilities: "Und ich mußte auf einmal denken, daß dieses Wasser da vielleicht doch nicht das Wasser des Lebens war und die Marienkirche nicht das erhebenste Bauwerk und unsere Stadt nicht die einzige Stadt der Welt."<sup>24</sup> We can readily accept the narrator's assertion that Christa T. is "kein Herrnkind" in the sense of being either of high birth or the vassal of some master, but really more like a "Sternkind," bright, solitary and also perhaps, as her fate reveals, endowed with destiny. Already as a ten year old child she derives a great deal of inner strength from her writing, using it not so much as a retreat from the world, but as a way of clarifying problems and coming to terms with the potentially overwhelming complexities of the external world: "*Daß ich nur schreibend über die Dinge komme!*" (40). At the same time she sees writing as a way of getting to know and understand her inner self and as such it will constitute an important part of her development.

Thus it would seem from the outset that Christa T.'s later difficulty in saying "ich" is not the result of a timid, uncomprehending ego beleaguered from within or made weak by intimidation from without. On the contrary, her original sense of self seems unshakable and not in the least dependent on others: "Die Wahrheit war: Sie brauchte uns nicht" (12). Yet, despite this psychic robustness that seems to be her birthright, Christa T. reveals herself exceptionally vulnerable and much less "lebensfähig" than even the most insecure of Virginia Woolf's characters. And it is to a great extent precisely her unfailing, uncompromising sense of self as ego-ideal, that is her undoing.

The certainty and sense of wholeness Christa T. demonstrated as a child is undermined first during her formative years under fascism and later again when she lives as a young woman under socialism. Having succumbed for a time to the Nazi ideology, Christa

T. begins to see through the inhumanity of the system as the war progresses and recognizes that it has little to do with the humanistic ideals inherent in Goethe's "Edel sei der Mensch" (112), that she has instinctively held since childhood. What sets her apart from the general population is her willingness to keep vivid in her mind the deeply troubling images of the past, to remember not only the atrocities committed by the state in the name of justice, but also the silent witness borne by the majority of the population that condoned them. she knows the simple truth that it is only by keeping the past alive in the present that we can hope to avoid those evils in the future. Recalling how as a young girl she inwardly recoiled from those who stood by idly while the gypsy boy's family was forced to leave town, thinking, "ICH, denkt des Kind. ICH bin anders" (27) she now reasserts her independence of mind by burning her books and pamphlets of Nazi propaganda, wary from that point on of all forms of "herd mentality." Convinced that there is no certainty in this world outside this firm moral sense which sustains her strong notion of integrity, she becomes suspicious of systems that offer all-too-ready solutions for complex social problems.

Nevertheless, finding that the ideals put forth under socialism during the founding years of the GDR coincide with her own humanistic views, she senses a possibility for the reconciliation of individual needs and societal demands. By drawing on the philosophy of Johannes R. Becher with its emphasis on human individuation, on "dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen"<sup>25</sup> and Ernst Bloch's theory of the dialectically "mediated" subject-object relationship with its eventual synthesis in the utopian state, Christa T. and by extension, Christa Wolf, understand self-realization as essentially a social process and as such a necessary prerequisite for the development of humankind and the state.<sup>26</sup> Though Bloch's thought implies the possibility of the creation of a kind of paradise on earth, it is important to understand that his emphasis is on the *process*, rather than the *goal*. "Vollkommenheit," therefore, in Blochian terms is not that kind of sterile and static perfection, the desire for which Christa T.'s narrator calls "den gefährlichen Wunsch nach reiner, schrecklicher Vollkommenheit" (162), but rather a perpetual process, "ein unendlicher Entstehungsprozeß," that through the dialectic between subject and object, individual and society, past and present reveals ever new possibilities for existence. A society committed to the principle of perpetual unfolding, or "andauernd entstehen" (187), has a particular appeal for the protagonist, who just barely escaped the Nazi's attempt to usurp and replace her progressive humanistic ideals with their own version of "schreckliche Vollkommenheit" (162). The hope that by simply "being," she could be useful, "könnte der Welt zu ihrer Vollkommenheit nötig sein" (6), rekindles Christa T.'s long dormant hope for self-actualization, giving new purpose to her life: "Nichts Geringers hat sie zum Leben gebraucht" (60).

It does not take long, however, for Christa T.'s deeply rooted fear of ideological entrapment, closed systems, and false certainties to resurface. Her suspicions at the university where she is preparing for a teaching career, that for every question there might already be a recorded answer is confirmed as it becomes apparent that the perpetuation of the system ("der absoluten Perfektion des Apparates" (64)) requires her participation "in name only" and thus nothing less than the elimination ("sich auslöschen" [64]) of the individual, that is,

the elimination of an individual as a growing, thinking and imaginative being and its "rebirth" as just another rigid, undifferentiated cog in the machine. Disillusioned once again because of yet another rift between reality and ideal, Christa T. nevertheless continues with her studies, trying to meet the demands of self and society through teaching. But this, too, proves disappointing when through the Essay Contest and the Toad Episode she is confronted with a new generation of insensitive, selfish and unimaginative pupils who insist on unquestioned social adaptation as the perfect vehicle for personal advancement: "Anpassung. Anpassung um jeden Preis" (124). Equally disappointing is a system that thinks nothing of the contradiction inherent in reducing the humanistic idealism of Marx to placard slogans, while promoting the most one-sided and callous of its citizens to the most influential positions.

Recognizing the impossibility of enhancing society's humanness by encouraging the unfolding of her students' potentials while instilling in them respect for the "halb realen, halb phantastischen Existenz des Menschen" (123), Christa T. abandons the public for the private realm, seeking fulfillment in love and writing instead. Though this move, which after one failed attempt at love results in marriage and parenthood, is clearly not to be understood as a flight into idyllic domesticity, it is also more than just a more circumspect attempt at self-actualization. For Christa T. it is one more way to help propel the world toward perfection: "Was fehlt der Welt zu ihrer Vollkommenheit? Zunächst und für eine ganze Weile dies: die vollkommene Liebe" (69). However, the attempts at entrapment and subtle corruption of her ideals in the public realm leave her disillusioned and wary even of private human relationships.

Having never been averse to a situation of dependency, provided it was she who was doing the choosing, ("sich in Abhängigkeit zu begeben" war ihr "nie ganz und gar zuwider ... wenn nur sie es sein konnte, die wählte" [181]). Christa T. gives the impression that, for her, love would have to be a conscious choice. And, indeed, the way she approaches the relationship with Kostja seems to support this: "Wir wollen nebeneinander hergehen" (69). However, she underestimates her own capacity for emotional involvement if she thinks she can avoid serious attachment and its potential pain by loving Kostja without actually falling in love with him or by pretending that she does not care about reciprocity: "Wenn ich dich liebe, was geht's dich an" (69). Because she is unable to apply the kind of critical ability that sets her apart in the social realm to her own erotic life, she allows herself to be swept away: "Hingabe, was immer daraus folgt. Mangel an Vorsicht und Zurückhaltung" (70). Thus, when this "Spiel ... mit hohem Einsatz" (70) turns to grim reality and Kostja prefers to take off with "blonde Inge," a well adapted character, as we know from Thomas Mann, Christa T., the nonconformist, is left to contemplate suicide. Clearly, then, the unchecked cultivation of the inner or "fantastic" self without the simultaneous acknowledgement of objective reality can have grave consequences. Kostja, beautiful and superficial with his passion for quoting and his derivative mind, who appealed only to her "fantastic" side, was patently not the ideal partner and Christa T. should have realized that. Furthermore, since the relationship almost cost her life, it was surely not the kind of "vollkommene Liebe" that would have helped speed the world toward a greater state of

perfection, although it may well have been the kind of love a romantic like Goethe's Werther would have died for without hesitation.

The more Christa T.'s options for meaningful participation in society are stifled, the more she resorts to the dangerous realm of the "fantastic" where an overwhelming sense of uselessness and self-doubt finally drive her to the brink of despair.

Mir steht alles fremd wie eine Mauer entgegen. Ich taste die Steine ab, keine Lücke. Was soll ich es mir länger verbergen: Keine Lücke für mich. An mir liegt es. Ich bin es, der die notwendige Konsequenz fehlt. Wie ist mir doch alles, als ich es zurest in Büchern las, so sehr leicht und natürlich vorgekommen. (80)

Yet it is her writing – the only way she had "über die Dinge zu kommen" – which in the form of the suicide letter to her sister that was never sent, saves her by holding out hope that she might yet be able to meet her needs for actualization in both the personal and public realm by having a child.

Redeemed through her writing, like the poet Theodor Storm, whom she admired for his ability to maintain psychic equilibrium by overcoming conflicts through creativity ("Er aber, der *letzter geistiger Konsequenz aus dem Wege geht*, bleibt vergleichsweise heil, *klagt aus, was sein empfindsames Gemut verletzt, che die Konflikte ihre volle Höhe und Scharfe gewinnen können*" [108]), Christa T. takes a long time before she commits herself to Justus. Righteous and "just" as his name implies and capable of always doing the right thing at the right moment, Justus would seem the perfect complement to Christa T.'s own impulsiveness and as such provide a stabilizing influence (128). Yet this relationship, too, is doomed, for it clearly lacks the passion, that "fantastic" element, that drew her to Kostja. Thus, with the "real" side of her personality now fixed in conventionality, the relationship with her as yet unbound "fantastic" side becomes problematic, thrusting her into the debilitating affair with the closed-minded Blasing: "Die unverbrauchten Gefühle fingen an, sie zu vergiften" (173). Her last attempt at self-actualization through the building of the house, for many critics a positive step in her personal development<sup>27</sup>, can thus also be seen as a desperate effort to create some fortification against the tide of the inner pressures that threaten to overwhelm her ("Dämme bauen gegen unmässige Ansprüche, phantastische Wünsche, ausschweifende Träume" [135]) by seeking refuge in the thoroughly material world. Though Christa T. at this point still thinks she can, in this apparently creative way, unearth her buried half and restore wholeness to her being ("Ich grab mich aus"), it is quite clear to the narrator that she is really burying herself: "Und du wirst dich vergraben" (167). Thus, whereas Christa T. had hoped at one point to make the world "dicht" through her writing, to preserve "die schöne, helle, feste Welt, die ihr Teil sein sollte" (25), she now seeks to survive by sealing up ("dicht machen") her own inner self. Ignoring the narrator's advice to write, "Schreib doch Krischan. Warum schreibst du nicht?" (190), she gradually abandons the one activity, which, as she had learned from Storm, might have insured her survival, because it cannot, in its socially unmediated form become this kind of vehicle for self-discovery she intended it to be.<sup>28</sup> Dissipating, therefore, what little energy she has left

in meaningless activity, her sense of self deteriorates at a rapid rate:

Alle ihre Versuche, den toten Kreis zu verlassen, der sich um sie gebildet hatte, kamen in schrecklichem Gleichmut nur immer wieder zu ihr zurück. Sie spürte, wie ihr unaufhaltsam das Geheimnis verloren ging, das sie lebensfähig machte: das Bewußtsein dessen, wer sie in Wirklichkeit war. Sie sah sich in eine unendliche Menge von tödlich banalen Handlungen and Phrasen aufgelöst. (174)

Having cut herself off, prematurely, from the development of her hidden potential both in love and work ("die unendlichen Möglichkeiten," (184), "das Spiel mit Varianten hat aufgehört" [152]), results in an ever greater alienation from her ego-ideal and as such in the repression that is the cause of her increasing fatigue (*Lebensmüdigkeit*): "Niemals kann man durch das, was man tut, so müde werden wie durch das, was man nicht tut oder nicht tun kann" (154).<sup>29</sup> Trapped, she locks herself in and slowly suffocates, as her death by leukemia, the disease marked by impoverished, oxygen-starved blood would indicate.<sup>30</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Christa T.'s life was without purpose or benefit. In fact, unlike the memory of Mrs. Ramsay which insinuates itself upon an unwitting Lily, Christa T.'s narrator sets out quite deliberately to rescue Christa T. from oblivion. Yet, even though she asserts that Christa T. is needed, "es scheint, wir brauchen sie" (9), she never really tells us why, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusion. Clearly her reminiscences about Christa T., her "nach-denken" not just in the sense of pursuing in thought, but pursuing Christa T.'s thoughts in an effort to capture the essence of her being is to facilitate the process of identification the narrator so clearly seeks. This blurring of the subject-object relationship allows the narrator both to reconcile herself to a figure she did not at one time wholly approve of, and enable her to resurrect in concrete terms an image of her own better self, or ego-ideal.<sup>31</sup> In other words, by confronting Christa T. in memory, the narrator unearths something that, though lost for some time, had always been a part of her, while Lily Briscoe's encounter with the "ghost" of Mrs. Ramsay brings her face to face with an aspect of herself heretofore completely unknown. Yet, since both are restored or made more "whole" by the encounter it would seem that these two rememberers are the real protagonists of these novels. And indeed, it would be difficult to refute that Lily Briscoe, a secondary character in the first part of *To the Lighthouse*, is the undisputed heroine of the third and last part. In Christa Wolf's novel, however, the situation is more complicated, especially if we take seriously Wolf's remark that she regarded not Christa T. or the narrator, but rather the relationship between the two as the "Mittelpunkt" of the work.<sup>32</sup> She thus seems to posit an "invisible protagonist" that emerged in the process of writing and that we should consider in the process of reading as well. Christa Wolf, then, not only dissolves those rigid divisions between narrator and narrated, subject and object that Virginia Woolf tried so hard to uphold by creating a largely absent narrator, but, as a natural progression of the dialectical process, extends the concept of protagonist to include author and reader as well. The self-actualization or "Zu-sich-selber-Kommen" that is denied Christa T. in her own time is thus realized in her narrator, and by extension, the author, who would, in her own life and work appear to be the

true heir to both. Furthermore, since Christa Wolf perceives her art as an ongoing dialectical process, it is quite likely that the liberating effect the book had on its author might well extend to its readers, leading them to the discovery of the uncharted territory locked deep within the recesses of their own being. "Ein Buch muß die Axt sein für das gefrorene Meer in uns"<sup>33</sup> said Kafka, and it might, therefore, be hoped that Christa Wolf's insistence, "daß man um jeden Preis versuchen muß, den Kreis dessen, was wir über uns selbst wissen oder zu wissen glauben, zu durchbrechen und zu überschreiten"<sup>34</sup> would find resonance in the social realm. Moreover, through her depiction of the interdependence of the private and the social, Christa Wolf seems to emerge here as precisely the kind of author Christa T. would have been, had she lived in a more congenial time. For unlike Lily Briscoe's painting which brought only private pleasure and seemed destined for an attic, the work of Christa T.'s narrator and by extension Christa Wolf, is a good example of what is meant by a socially responsible literature of the self that one could envision becoming the powerful tool for social change Bloch meant it to be.<sup>35</sup> Thus, despite her resignation to the "Nichterfüllung" of her goal in her own time, Christa T.'s hope for the future seems justified, for as she had anticipated it, future time is, indeed, her own time.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, then, to Virginia Woolf's characters, especially Lily, whose fragility is linked to weakened ego sense derived through deeply rooted insecurities and gender related intimidation, that is, from within as well as without ("women can't paint, women can't write"), Christa T.'s diminishing self-assuredness derives rather from exceptional ego-strength, more specifically, from a highly developed notion of ego-ideal. Critics who fault Christa T. for her apparently selfish inability to reconcile herself to the prevailing fail to understand that one cannot, even for appearance's sake, join that which one intends to change and maintain one's sense of moral integrity.<sup>37</sup> Fatigue and illness as the result of the refusal to do what would go against one's nature or the inability to act in accordance with one's better nature may thus be indicative of physical weakness, but, as the narrator insists, it is also the mark of spiritual fortitude: "Das war ihre Schwäche und ihre geheime Überlegenheit" (134). Christa T.'s inability to say "ich", "die Schwierigkeit, 'ich' zu sagen" (194), is thus a matter of uncompromising honesty, of the refusal to call "ich" that which she perceives to be only a part, but not the whole of her being. Furthermore, though one might be tempted to blame her personal demise on her inability to curtail her "fantastic" or emotional side, one ought not overlook the fact that it was the very society that first kindled her idealism that now betrayed it by making it impossible for her to find a niche in it. As Anna Kuhn so succinctly put it, "since her sense of self is achieved against the definition of the norm, she knows only what she is *not*."<sup>38</sup> The situation for Lily and Christa T. is thus quite the reverse: Lily, initially repressed, manages to unleash her libidinal power through the confrontation, in memory, with Mrs. Ramsay, giving expression to her newly found sense of self through art, while Christa T., psychologically "whole," becomes ill because she is forced to repress that part of her ego that represents her ideal self and is prevented from resolving the dilemma of her existence through art. One is restored by the integration into a society that had regarded her as an outsider, the other destroyed because she persisted in being one.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontent*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>"Tatsächlich wird aber das Ich nach der Vollendung der Trauerarbeit wieder frei und ungehemmt." Sigmund Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie," *Studienausgabe*, III (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982) p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Contemplating the 96<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her deceased father's death, Virginia Woolf writes: "I used to think of him and mother daily; but writing the *Lighthouse* laid them in my mind... (I believe this to be true – that I was obsessed by them both, unhealthily; and writing of them was a necessary act.)" Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 138. See also Woolf, *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (Sussex: The University Press, 1976), pp. 80-81. For a detailed analysis of the psychological significance of *To the Lighthouse*, the relationship between fact and fiction, see Mark Spilka's excellent article: "On Lily Briscoe's Borrowed Grief: A Psycho-Literary Speculation," *Criticism*, 21 (1979), pp. 1-33.

<sup>4</sup>"Später merkte ich, daß das Objekt meiner Erzählung gar nicht so eindeutig sie, Christa T., war oder blieb. Ich stand auf einmal mir selbst gegenüber, das hatte ich nicht vorgesehen." Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview," in *Die Dimension des Autors. Essays und Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche 1959-1985* (Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Sylvia Schmitz-Burgard in her essay, "Psychoanalyse eines Mythos. Nachdenken über Christa T.," understands "die Angst um die eigene Person" as the driving force behind the remembrances of the narrator, *Monatshefte*, 79, No. 4 (1987), p. 465.

<sup>6</sup>Spilka, *Criticism*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>"Daher wird Literatur, wird jedenfalls für mich das Schreiben immer mehr ein Instrument zur Öffnung unbewobter Bereiche; der Weg zu dem Depot des Verbotenen, von früh an Ausgesonderten, nicht Zugelassenen, Verdrängten; zu den Quellen des Traums, der Imagination und der Subjektivität – was auch bedeutet, daß Schreiben für mich eine Dauer-Auseinandersetzung mit jenen Bindungen ist, die auch durch Wörter wie 'Staat', 'europäisch' und 'Literatur' gekennzeichnet sind. Die Spannung, die aus dieser Konfliktlage entsteht, ist, wie ich hoffe, nicht zerstörerisch, sondern ein kleiner Teil jener Energie, die in unserer Gegenwart auch, zum Glück, auf unserem alten Kontinent, daran gewendet wird, das Leben durch ein neues Wertgefüge zu sichern." Christa Wolf.

<sup>8</sup>"Preisrede aus Anlaß der Verleihung des österreichischen Staatspreises für europäische Literatur," in: *Der Falter* 6, 1985, S. 25-26.

<sup>9</sup>Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster* (Berlin: Aufbauverlag 1976), p. 85.

<sup>10</sup>Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>This ambiguity of identity is a distinguishing feature of Christa Wolf's work. For a further discussion of this topic see: Helen Fehervary, "Christa Wolf's Prose: A Landscape of Masks," *New German Critique*, 9 No. 27, (Fall 1982), pp. 57-87.

<sup>12</sup>See the letter to Molly MacCarthy, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924 in *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Johanna Trautmann (New York and London: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1975-1980), vol. III, p. 134 f. Woolf seemed unimpressed, especially, by what she perceived to be the effects of psychoanalysis on some of her friends: "The last people I saw were James and Alix [Strachey], fresh from Freud-Alix grown gaunt and vigorous – James puny and languid – such is the effect of 10 months psycho-analysis." In: *The Letters*, v. II, p. 482. "Freud has certainly brought out the lines in Alix. Even physically, her bones are more prominent. Only her eyes are curiously vague." v. II, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup>Woolf, *Moments of Being*, p. 81. Rachel Bowlby in her book *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) quotes this passage to support her view that "Woolf drew directly on psychoanalytic insights in her prose writing (especially *Three Guineas*), but she also made use of them in her fiction." (p. 65). This, however, seems to be somewhat of an overstatement, especially since Woolf's relationship to Freud is difficult to determine. In a letter to Harmon H. Goldstone, March 1932, she seems to deny any direct influence: "I have not studied Dr. Freud or any psychoanalyst – indeed I think I have never read any of their books: my knowledge is merely from superficial talk. Therefore any use of their methods must be instinctive." *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. III, ed. Nigel Nicolson & Johanna Trautmann (New York & London: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1975-1980), p. 36. Though writing *Lighthouse* might have freed her temporarily from the obsessive preoccupation with her deceased parents, the fact that after completing it she felt "nearer suicide, seriously,

since 1913," eight suggest that the effect of her "self-analysis" was only temporary. *A Writer's Diary*, p. 229.<sup>14</sup>

"Mr. Joyce's indecency in *Ulysses* seems to me the conscious and calculated indecency of a desperate man who feels that in order to breathe he must break windows." Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *The Virginia Woolf Reader*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska. (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1984), p. 210.

<sup>15</sup>Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1954), pp. 60-61.

<sup>16</sup>Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>17</sup>Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1927), pp. 201-02. Henceforth, all references in the text will be to this edition.

<sup>19</sup>Though the lighthouse does seem to symbolize some kind of union of opposites, it does not, I believe, represent "an ideal state of being, associated with Mrs. Ramsay," as Herbert Marder asserts. See: *Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 141.

<sup>20</sup>Mrs. Ramsay's ability to be a kind of mirror for others has, of course, also a negative side. In fact, one might argue that in this she is merely playing to perfection the role society traditionally assigned to women. In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf expresses similar thoughts on the relationships between famous male writers and the women that inspired them: "What they [men] got, it is obvious, was something that their own sex was unable to supply; and it would not be rash, perhaps, to define it further ... as some stimulus, some renewal of creative power which it is in the gift only of the opposite sex to bestow" (90). And even more pointedly: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle ... mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge" (35f). (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957).

<sup>21</sup>Though negative thoughts about Mrs. Ramsay cross Lily's mind frequently she doesn't seem to be able to endure them without a considerable degree of guilt, which in turn causes her to lash out against herself. "Mrs. Ramsay was willful: she was commanding (of course, Lily reminded herself, I am thinking of her relations with women, and I am much younger, an insignificant person..." (p. 76). "Poor William Bankes, she (Mrs. Ramsay) seemed to be saying, as if her own weariness had been partly pitying people, and the life in her, her resolve to live again, had been stirred by pity. And it was not true. Lily thought: it was one of those misjudgements of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other people's." (128).

<sup>22</sup>J. Hillis Miller, "Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*," in *Modernism Reconsidered*, Harvard English Studies, No. 11 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 177.

<sup>23</sup>Louise A. Poresky also understands the line Lily draws in the middle of the canvas as uniting "all the opposites that have fought within her [Lily] until now," and as such, emblematic of the "wholeness" of the self. However, seen against the backdrop of Virginia Woolf's godless universe, I find Poresky's allegorical assertion that "the lighthouse represents God" and that Lily's new-found sense of self owes, therefore, to "God within the Self," far-fetched. See Poresky, *The Elusive Self* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1981), pp. 128 & 152.

<sup>24</sup>And not just Lily, but Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam, too, gain some important insights into themselves and each other during their trip to the lighthouse, completing in actuality, as befits people of action, the journey Lily, the artist, undertakes in her mind. In the end they have all, each in his or her own way, achieved some victory "over the impersonal powers of chaos and death through their concentration on the task in hand and through the intensity of emotion which they possess or inspire." Hermione Lee, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 136.

<sup>25</sup>Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1975), p. 17. Henceforth, all references in the text will be to this edition.

<sup>26</sup>For Johannes R. Becher, writer and cultural minister during the early years of the GDR, this "Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen" was nothing less than the fullest realization of an individual's potential. "Es ist die Erfüllung aller der Möglichkeiten, wie sie dem Menschen gegeben sind," Becher, quoted in Sonja Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf. Realien zur Literatur*, v. 224 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), p. 33.

<sup>27</sup>See especially, Ernst Bloch, *Vom Geist der Utopie* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1971); *Das Prinzip Hoffnung I* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), engl. *The Principle of Hope* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Also Andreas



Huyssen, "Auf den Spuren Ernst Blochs. *Nachdenken über Christa T.*" in *Christa Wolf: Materialienbuch*, ed. Klaus Sauer (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand 1979), pp. 81-87.

<sup>17</sup>Andreas Huyssen sees the building of the house as a positive step in Christa T.'s self-realization process, as "individuell verwirklichte Hoffnung," which fails only because as personal "Heimat" it does not connect her with the social realm. Huyssen, "Auf den Spuren," p. 87. I would like to argue, however, that the building of the house puts the kind of drain on her energies that prevent her from ever developing her potential as a writer and is, as such, a hindrance in her self-actualization process.

<sup>18</sup>Christa T.'s writing cannot become socially productive, for as Sonja Hilzinger points out, "für eine solche unpolitische, auf der Genauigkeit wahrheitsgemäßer Verarbeitung der jüngsten Vergangenheit beruhenden Erinnerung ist noch nicht die rechte Zeit." Hilzinger, *Christ Wolf*, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup>"Wo das Abrufen der Gedächtnisinhalte nicht geschehe, sei die Energie des Ich gebunden, darum dessen Fähigkeit zu handeln eingeschränkt." Bernhard Greiner in seiner Diskussion von Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* in "Die Schwierigkeit, 'ich' zu sagen: Christa Wolf's psychologische Orientierung des Erzählens," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift*, 55, (1981), 329.

<sup>20</sup>In her definition of illness as the result of unrealized potential, Christa Wolf echoes, again, Johannes R. Becher for whom this condition resulted in unhappiness and despair: "Unlust und Unbehagen schafft Traurigkeit, und die Traurigkeit steigert sich zur Angst, zur Schwermut und Verzweiflung, da wir das Leben nicht leben, das uns zu leben gegeben wäre." Quoted in Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf*, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>Schmitz-Burgard sees in the two figures of Christa T. and the narrator the expression of a divided "ich," which the one half, the narrator, seeks to restore through reflection and self-analysis: "Die scheinbare Dualität des Ichs, die fiktive Spaltung in Gesellschafts und Einzelwesen, wird als Mittel herangezogen, um die Selbstzensur zu überwinden." Schmitz-Burgard "Psychoanalyse eines Mythos," p. 470.

<sup>22</sup>"Die Beziehung zwischen 'uns' - der Christa T. und dem Ich-Erzähler -- ruckten ganz von selbst in den Mittelpunkt: die Verschiedenheit der Charaktere und ihre Berührungspunkte, die Spannung zwischen 'uns' und ihre Auflösung, oder das Ausbleiben der Auslösung. Wäre ich Mathematiker, würde ich wahrscheinlich von einer 'Funktion' sprechen: Nichts mit Händen und Füßen Greifbares, nichts Sichtbares, Materielles, aber etwas ungemein Wirksames." Christa Wolf, "Selbstinterview," in *Die Dimension des Autors: Essays and Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche* (Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Franz Kafka, *Briefe 1902-1924* (New York/Frankfurt/Main, 1958), p. 27.

<sup>24</sup>Wolf, "Selbstinterview," p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>See Christa Wolf's remarks in footnote 5.

<sup>26</sup>"Jetzt tritt sie hervor, gelassen auch vor der Nichterfüllung, denn sie hatte die Kraft, zu sagen: Noch nicht. Wie sie viele Leben mit sich führte, in ihrem Innern aufbewahrte, aufhob, so führte sie mehrere Zeiten mit sich, in denen sie, wie in der 'wirklichen', teilweise unerkannt lebte, und was in der einen unmöglich ist, gelingt in der anderen. Von ihren verschiedenen Zeiten aber sagte sie heiter: Unsere Zeit." *Christa T.*, p. 194.

<sup>27</sup>Colin E. Smith faults Christa T. for her "inability to contribute to a 'Lernkollektiv'" and to "sacrifice things which arouse her personal interest... in favor of dispassionate academic work," attributing these failings on the one hand to her ability as a gifted individual to "look beyond the demands of the present moment," on the other to her inability to accept her role as writer and outsider (90f). He seems to miss the point, however, for it is precisely the repressive political climate of Christa T.'s world that prevents her from being a writer, (or an effective humanistic teacher), forcing her to fall back on her self, with few avenues for self-expression, except those which might strike one as socially less "responsible." Furthermore, there is no contradiction between Christa T.'s assertion of a "tiefe Übereinstimmung mit dieser Zeit," and her inability to find a niche in it, since this is simply a reflection of the contradiction inherent in the humanistic theory (which she supports) and intolerant practice (of which she is a victim) of the political reality of her world. Colin E. Smith, *Tradition, Art and Society: Christa Wolf's Prose*, Germanistik in der blauen Eule, vol. 10 (Essen: Die blaue Eule, 1987), pp. 90-92.

<sup>28</sup>Anna K. Kuhn, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism*, Cambridge Studies in German (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 77.

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# Parmenides and the Tradition of the Religious Poet/Philosopher

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The extant fragments of Parmenides of Elea's book, *On Nature*, speak to us in poetic, mysterious, and oracular tones. Although usually seen as a central figure in the Greek rationalist/scientific philosophical tradition, Parmenides can also profitably be viewed as a religious poet/philosopher. The tradition of religious poet/philosophers includes, among many others of course, the ancient authors of the Upanishads, the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Dhammapada* and the Old Testament.

All of the above demonstrate significant affinities to the fragments of Parmenides which, it will be seen, warrant a place among them. The ancient authors mentioned above mirror Parmenides' notion of *what-is* very closely. Although Kirk, Raven, and Schofield claim that "ancients and moderns alike are agreed upon a low estimation of Parmenides' gifts as a writer, "they later concede that there are passages of "clumsy grandeur" (241).

David Gallop, however, confers upon Parmenides the appellation "philosopher-poet" and thinks that Parmenides' work was "consciously modelled on the bold enterprise of an epic hero, Odysseus" (5).

Parmenides introduced a notion of reality that was new and difficult for his Greek contemporaries to comprehend. To him reality, or *what-is*, is not a perceptible physical substance. It is suprasensible, if not transcendent. This notion an suprasensible authentic reality was, nonetheless, commonly expressed in the ancient Asian religious texts already mentioned. And their cryptic yet majestic style (which derives from the belief that they are conveying eternal truths received directly from their gods) is shared by Parmenides, in contrast to the logical, closely-reasoned approach of the Greek philosophers.

These great religious works employ pregnant phrases, richly resonating with implications and multiple meanings, to assure us that *what-is* is not to be found in the world of appearances. Unlike his Greek predecessors Thales and Anaximenes, or his nearer contemporary Heraclitus, Parmenides did not think that the world's primary originaive substance was a discernible element such as water, air, or fire. He did not base his cosmogonical and ontological conclusions, as the others did, on observations of the natural world. Nor, like his successors Plato and Democritus, did he specify that the originaive substance was either an abstract concept or a tiny physical, yet imperceptible, element. (Although *what is* and originaive substance needn't be identical, for Parmenides the necessarily are. Parmenides' *what-is* is one, indivisible, ungenerated, and eternal ; *is* is now, always was, and always will be. Therefore for Parninides *what-is* must also be the originaive substance.)

Parmenides was not so much a natural scientist as a mystical, poetic prophet, zealously burning with knowledge received from on high. He does not seek to persuade us of his truth

through logical discourse, but instead claims for it an empyreal provenance—a celestial source. This source is the “goddess” who bestows upon Parmenides her “trustworthy speech... and thought about truth” (frag. 8:50-51).

David Gallop defines Parmenides’ notion of what-is as “a single continuous, changeless, and motionless plenum” (21). Parmenides himself says that it is “un-beginning and unceasing” (8:27) and “whole and changeless” (8:38).

For mortals, however, “the things which seem had to have genuine existence” (1:31-32). But the goddess cautions Parmenides against following “the beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust” (1:30) and discloses to him her idea of authentic reality :

What-is is ungenerated and imperishable;

Whole, single-limbed, steadfast, and complete;

Nor was [it] once, nor will [it] be, since [it] is now, all together.

One, continuous .... (8:3-6)

This description of what-is, of the basic, original, sustaining force or substance in things, sets Parmenides in opposition to the Greek rationalists who employed scientific observation to discover in nature’s visible, palpable elements an originative substance.

(Only Anaximander seems to have anticipated Parmenides by designating his originative substance apeiron, meaning the indefinite or infinite. Thus his apeiron is suprasensible, but vague and undefined—“without further qualification” according to Raven, Kirk, and Schofield ((108)). Parmenides, on the other hand, attempted an evocative yet precise definition of what-is.)

Parmenides’ what-is is a force which connects all things, or a substance which inheres in all things. Like the Old Testament God, the Tao, Brahman, or Dharma, it is somehow in or with all things yet separate from them. Owing to this dual nature, all of the above have been identified with the things of this world: Parmenides’ what-is “has been named all things” (8:38); the Tao is the “mother of all under heaven” (*Tao Te Ching*, chap. 25); Brahman “dwells in all beings but is separate from all beings” (*Upanishads*, 96); Dharmadhatu, one of the myriad aspects of Dharma is “the basic element of the universe” or “the Raw-material of Phenomena” (Bary 102); and the Hebrew God is a father to mankind (Malachi 1:6 and 2:10).

But it is in the transcendent nature of these terms that we find significant similarities. The *Katha Upanishad* was written, as were all the texts treated here, during the “axial age” (the era extending from about 800-200 B.C. in which many of the world’s earliest enduring, and most influential, religious and ethical thinkers lived—see Jaspers, 170). In it, the originative substance is addressed as Brahman. Brahman is the “Uncaused Cause” and the “Self-Existent”; it is “without beginning, without end, eternal, immutable” (*Upanishads*, 20).

Analogous to this is Parmenides’ what-is, which is “changeless” (8:26) “un-beginning and unceasing” (8:27) and, as we have already seen, “ungenerated and imperishable.”

The Old Testament God, in Exodus 3:14, declares “I AM THAT I AM.” This echoes Parmenides’ statement that “what-is is in contact with what-is” (8:25) and that it “is all full of what-is” (8:24).

In Malachi 3:6 God says: “I change not.” He is immutable and changeless as is Brahman

and Parmenides' what-is. And is Isaiah 44:6 God says: "I am the first, and I am the last." Again the close correspondence between this and the "un-beginning and unceasing" of what-is and Brahman's "without beginning, without end" is apparent.

A third work which promulgates a correlating view of authentic reality and its originative substance is the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, the *Tao Te Ching*. Tao is the way of all things, or the path that things would naturally follow if left unimpeded.

Tao is called "Unceasing" in chapter 14 of the *Tao Te Ching*. It is hailed as "Tao everlasting" in chapters 32 and 37, and deemed "inexhaustible" in chapters 4 and 35. These are adjectives which mirror those used to describe what-is, Brahman, and Jehovah.

The Tao is also a path, the "way of Heaven" (chap. 73, 77 and 81), or "the great path" (chap. 53). Parmenides, too, follows a path in search of truth. Conveyed by horse and chariot, he is placed on "the much-speaking route of the goddess" (1:2-3) and travels to "the gates of the paths of Night and Day" (1:11).

The Tao, too, is likened to a gate, or door, in chapter 1 of the *Tao Te Ching*. It is the "door to all hidden mysteries."

Both suggest a place before or beyond all differentiation and opposition. (The early seventeenth-century mystic, Jakob Boehme, described God as an "abyss" and Ninian Smart thinks that Boehme's God is "the *Ungrund*—the undifferentiated absolute that is ineffable and neither light nor darkness ((328)). All three authors propose a primordial place out of which truth emanates.)

Parmenides' gate may be an attempt to reconcile the opposites of Heraclitus. He may have wished to prove that he had penetrated to a place or time before opposites divide, or where they converge, in order that he may claim to possess a truth more fundamental than, and anterior to, that of Heraclitus.

Heraclitus, nonetheless, parallels the *Tao Te Ching* when he uses the metaphor of the stretching of a bow to explain that the dynamic tension of opposites balances the forces in the world (see *Tao Te Ching*, chap. 77 and p.193 of Kirk, Raven, and Scholfield).

The Buddhist notion of Dharma is in accord with the Tao and Parmenides' what-is. Although the word is used to mean many things, Dharma is, perhaps above all, "the saving doctrine or way" (*Buddha*, 245). It is also "the one ultimate Reality" (*Scriptures*, 245).

The thoughts and teachings of the Buddha, a near contemporary of Parmenides, are collected in the *Dhammapada*. The title, like the *Tao Te Ching* or the fragments of Parmenides, has often been translated as *The Way of Truth*.

Dharma is the path that leads one out of the material world to extinction, or Nirvana. The *Dhammapada* tells us: "Strive to know the imperishable" (chap. 26). And the imperishable is one, for "all that consists of component parts will perish" (chap. 26). Thus the Buddhist's ultimate reality, like the others I have cited, is whole and eternal.

The idea of a path, or route, to the truth survives in Greek thought at least until Plato. W.K.C. Guthrie writes of Plato's use of the word "dike" (justice) in *The Republic*. Guthrie states that the "original meaning of *dike* may have been literally a way or path" (6). Although by Plato's time "dike is already personified as the majestic spirit of righteousness" (7), Guthrie

reflects that it is "impossible that the earlier meaning of the word should have ceased to colour the minds of the men who used it" (7).

Guthrie paraphrases Plato's final definition of *dike* as follows :

Justice. *dikaioσύνη*, the state of the man who follows *dike*, is no more than 'minding your own business', doing the thing, or following the way, which is properly your own. (7)

This would serve an admirable definition of the Tao as well.

Whereas the Tao, Brahman, Jehovah, and Dharma are clearly transcendent powers, as well as somehow being 'in' material phenomenon, Parmenides never clarifies his stance on this issue. Is what-is a discarnate power or force which may unify, structure, or sustain the world but which comprehends no corporeal attributes? Or is it merely the basic material out of which all things are made?

Parmenides failed to make this distinction and others because, according to Guthrie, he lacked "the ordinary tools of logic, and even of grammar" that would make these distinctions possible (47).

Parmenides was unclear regarding the two possible modes of the verb "to be." Guthrie claims that "the difference between the existential and the predicative use of the verb had not yet been elucidated" (48). Parmenides concerns himself mostly with the existential to-be, but only by dealing with the predicative to-be can one identify what something is or isn't (the plate is hot, the ocean is wet), or ascertain differences between things.

Thus for Parmenides what-is simply is. He can describe it, but the subtle shadings of a definition based on a comparison of qualities between things, enumerating their similarities and differences, is lacking. This left Parmenides no alternative other than to say that what-is is all the same and that anything different is not what-is and, consequently, has no true existence.

Guthrie reminds us that the Greeks of Parmenides' day "did not yet command a language capable of such a phrase as 'not in the same sense', and paradox was their only resource" (60). Therefore Parmenides was forced to say that all of what-is is the same even though the evidence of one's senses might tell one different.

A possible solution to the question of the immanent or transcendent nature of what-is may be sought in fragment 3:1: "because the same thing is there for thinking and for being." If we knew that by 'being' Parmenides meant physical existence, we could then try to determine whether he gives precedence to thinking or being : if we decided that Parmenides meant that thinking comes before being, then we could claim that his originative substance, or the authentic what-is, is transcendent—it is thought; if we grant priority to being, we could say that what-is is physical, though perhaps imperceptible (Democritus would soon opt for this answer in his theory of atoms).

Heidegger thought that Parmenides "consigns thinking to Being, while Berkeley refers Being to thinking" (84). (Shakespeare, agreeing with his nearer contemporary, has Hamlet say "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." (II. ii. 265-66)

Unfortunately we don't know if by 'being' Parmenides meant physical being. He may just as easily have thought of being as a concept or abstraction. If virtue is our example of a

thing that has being, then fragment 3:1 could read as a proto-Platonic statement suggesting that virtue exists outside of us and that we can think of it as well.

Because both virtue itself and our thought of it are equally suprasensible, granting priority of existence to either one would still leave us with an originaive substance that is necessarily transcendent in nature. Nonetheless, the present writer feels that, like the Tao, Brahman, Dharma, and Jehovah, Parmenides' what-is is the authentic reality behind the appearances of the world and that it somehow also imbues these appearances, by transcendent power or a physical enrichment, with a spark of significance and dignity.

We have seen some correspondences between Parmenides' conception of what-is and that of other ancient religious poet/philosophers. They all speak of a reality more momentous and fundamental than that of the phenomenal world.

Parmenides' forceful, mysterious, sometimes sublime language, his contention that his message is divinely inspired, his authoritative, commanding stance and disdain of logical discourse all demand that he be considered a peer and equal of the greatest religious poet/philosophers of the axial age.

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# Wole Soyinka's 'Idanre' : A Study in the Archetypal Image of the Woman and God

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In view of the recondite nature of Soyinka's 'Idanre', it will be necessary, before examining the subject at issue, to first of all take a bird's eye view of what this long, uninterrupted poem, written in free verse, is all about. In a word, 'Idanre' is a myth concerning traditional Africa tampered with by modern culture. This major and title poem of the seven groups of poems contained in the collection, consists of seven sections: 'deluge...', '...and after', 'pilgrimage', 'the beginning', 'the battle', 'recessional', and 'harvest'. For the sake of convenience, the seven parts of the poem can be divided into two distinct phases.

In the first phase which begins with the 'deluge...' and ends with the 'pilgrimage', the poet, like a coryphaeus, kind of sings the praises of the Yoruba god, Ogun who, according to the 'Notes On Idanre' given at the end of the poem, is "God of Iron and metallurgy, Explorer, Artisan, Hunter, God of War, Guardian of the Road, the Creative Essence".<sup>1</sup> Here, the relationship between the people and Ogun is quite cordial. A peaceful biological or earthly life is created, as a result of the celestial conflict between Ogun and Sango, "god of lightning and electricity".<sup>2</sup> The conflict arises from their brawl over the wine-girl, Oya who was formerly Ogun's wife, but later abandoned the wine-girl. Oya who was formerly Ogun's wife, but later abandoned him because of his "fearsome nature" for Sango.<sup>3</sup> The biological life created on earth is signaled by the down pour of rain. As indicated in the last stanza of the 'deluge...' and in the eleventh stanza of '...and after', the people salute this event by cultivating the earth and extracting clay and rare minerals from the land. The people however pay for these benefits by losing their lives in road accidents and by offering sacrifices, to appease "Ogun,...a demanding god".<sup>4</sup> In 'pilgrimage', the third poem of this first phase, Ogun returns to Idanre, his heavenly abode, only to discover, to his dismay, that during his absence, the shrines were desecrated by men. Ogun grieves that man is increasingly losing faith in god. The present desecration Ogun's abode and shrine is reminiscent of the rebellious act of Atóoda who rolled a rock – "the Boulder" – down onto the first or master-god, "smashing him to bits and creating the multiplicity of god-head".<sup>5</sup> Ogun regrets the fact that man is becoming increasingly uncontrollable as demonstrated by his re-enactment of the slave's rebellion against the father-god: "On the hills of Idanre memories/Grieved him, my master god, Vital/Flint of matter, total essence split again/On recurrent boulders".<sup>6</sup> At this point, the poet comes in with the comment that all things change, time dissolves the past – this truism is shown in the fact that the tribe's deities, now outcasts, exist only "in clay texts/And fossil textures".<sup>7</sup>

The note on which the first phase ends, takes us naturally to the second phase of the poem which is covered by 'the beginning', 'the battle' and 'recessional'. In this phase, we have another side of the cycle, we experience the effect of the "plague of finite chaos [that]/ creative, but the destructive side of Ogun. Here, we have the beginning of the vicious cycle, the tragic conflict of errors in which Ogun turns against his men. Like Hephaestus Vulcan who forged weapons for his people, but instead of leading them in their war against the enemy, this god of war gets drunk and slaughters his own men. At this point, we come across a number of statements relating to the need for man to be "earthed", to have his roots in the earth, to believe in his own inner force, rather than have faith in a god who turns round and destroys his own men. This event marks the completion of the vicious cycle-creation ends in destruction: a whole period of history has now elapsed. The last poem, 'harvest', is, in fact, a repetition of the cycle which begins with the good or productive side of Ogun who, in spite of the carnage, is still worshipped and sacrificed to by the people as the last two stanzas of the poem indicate. In fact, the "first fruits" of the harvest are offered to Ogun - "domes of [corn], of eggs and flesh/Of palm fruit, red, oil black".<sup>9</sup> During the sacrifices, Ogun once more communes and lives in harmony with his people. The events in 'Idanre', therefore, indicate that Soyinka subscribes to the cyclic theory of history, an age-old idea which holds that the world is periodic, the universe repeats itself *ad infinitum* in cycles of time. W.B. Yeats, in memorable terms, immortalizes this idea in his justly famous poems, 'The Second Coming' and 'The Magi', as well as in *A Vision*, "which deals with various types of human personality, with the 'gyres' of historical change and with the supernatural".<sup>10</sup> The reference to this universal notion of history serves as a fitting introduction to the central concern of this study, namely, the archetypal image of the woman and God in Soyinka's 'Idanre'. The paper's claim to uniqueness, indeed, lies in the wide-ranging comparison it makes between Soyinka's vision of the woman and God and that of other writers.

The aim of this study, in other words, is to show that despite the typical African background against which the poem is written, it draws, as it were, on all human history or recurrent patterns of human experiences throughout the ages. Clearly, Oya, Ogun and the rockhills of Idanre belong to the specific experiences of the Yoruba tribe, yet, they also symbolize archaic or archetypal situations; they relate to certain prototypes, to general universal aspects of human experience, occurring in various forms from age to age, from country to country, from race to race. In 'Idanre' we notice, for example, echoes of the Jewish conjectures which associate the cosmic creative process with a "feminine principle in the deity". Oya, the wine-girl, symbolizes this feminine element in the gods. This is shown in the fact that the conflict between Ogun and Sango, arising from their rivalry over Oya, leads to the creation of biological life. Soyinka is ostensibly saying that the conflict occasioned by Oya between the gods is healthy in that it results in a creative act, and a synthesis of essences that would not otherwise have occurred. This ties up with the Jewish claim contained in the Zohar - an abstract of non-orthodox Hebrew traditions of the thirteenth century - that the world is a product of the intercourse between God and Woman. According



to Professor Saurat.

In the *Zohar* 'the world is the outcome,  
the child, of sex-life within the divinity'.  
Woman on earth, 'small in her exile but powerful',  
is represented as an 'expression of the Matrona' –  
the feminine principle in the deity.<sup>11</sup>

This notion of "the Matrona" is clearly interwoven with the symbol of the Muse, the poet's companion on whom he depends for power, protection and inspiration. In '... and after' we notice that Ogun retires to his mountain abode after creation. Here again the feminine presence is felt. Oya mystically appears to Ogun and the poet "At pilgrims' rest beneath Idanre Hill "at night, a time" when sounds are clear/And silences ring pure tones as the pause/Of iron bells".<sup>12</sup> When Oya, the "bride Night"<sup>13</sup> appears, she produces palm-wine by some magical means and shares it among them :

...She swam an eel into the shadows felt her limbs  
Grow live, the torrents ran within and flooded us  
A gourd rose and danced between – without  
The night awaited celebration of the crops –  
She took and held it to her womb.  
Calm, beyond interpreting, she sat and in her grace  
Shared wine with us....<sup>14</sup>

Two importance facts connected with the image of the woman can be discerned in the above quotation – Oya's mysterious appearance on the hills at night and her magical production of wine. In other words, the passage associates Oya with night and wine. Being the creative element or, to use a Jungian terminology, the anima or soul-image in Ogun and Soyinka, both connected with creativity, Oya appears to the god and the poet at night.

Night here is a propitious moment for creativity because at this time supernatural or "sublimating essences" are at work. A solemn and quite moment of "silences" when all is at rest, night is thus a conducive time for recollection, a holy or visionary moment when the creative spirit is at its best. In 'harvest', Soyinka describes night as the time when the poet's imagination is liberated, thus enabling him to communicate with presences: "Night sets me free: .../ I ride on Ovary silences/In the wake of ghosts".<sup>15</sup> In the 'Preface' to the poem, Soyinka claims that 'Idanre' is, in fact, a record of his night-walk up the rockhills "in company of presences such as dilate the head and erase known worlds".<sup>16</sup> The poet and the presences "returned at dawn".<sup>17</sup> Oya, of course, was an integral part of the "presences" – in Soyinka's own words, "she was an eternal presence who charity had earthed me from the sublimating essence of the night".<sup>18</sup> In the nineteenth stanza of '...and after' the poet again talks of earthing his "being" at night "to the one [Oya] whose feet were wreathed/In dark vapours from earth's cooling pitch/...priestess at fresh shrines".<sup>19</sup>

The image of Oya as a priestess, as one who officiates or performs the rites of sacrifice, is given concrete realization towards the closing stanzas of the same poem, where she is pictured as a "caryatid at the door of sanctuary", "a strength/Among sweet reeds and

lemon bushes, palm/And fragrances of rain".<sup>23</sup> In the light of the references made to the palm-wine girl, a strength in Nature, the "bride of Night", a priestess and an "eternal presence" who charitably "earthed" the poet, we deduce that, for Soyinka, Oya is, in fact, the symbol of the Muse, a guardian, a divine mother who directs and protects the poet's creative powers. By constantly using the first person plural form, "we" and "us", Soyinka time and again reminds the reader of the inter-dependence that exists between the poet Ogun and Oya. They are inter-dependent or one in the sense that their spirits synthesize, as it were, and freely flow into one another: "Calm, beyond interpreting, she sat and in her grace/shared wine with us. The quiet of the night/Shawled us together...."<sup>24</sup> These lines obviously suggest that the poet, Ogun and Oya are enclosed, enveloped in the quietness of the night: they are controlled, that is, by the presence of the woman who is the "bride of Night".

Reference was also made to the fact that Oya is as well associated with wine. Soyinka considers wine here as a life force, an ingredient that enlivens the spirit and stimulates, actuates the imagination into creativity. Oya therefore symbolizes abundance or the fertility of the creative imagination. We have already referred to the scene where she "shared wine" with Ogun and the poet "beneath Idanre Hill". Oya, in fact, produced the wine by transforming into a palm tree from which "torrents" of wine flowed and "flooded" the trio. Instantly, "a gourd rose and danced" in the flood. Oya took it "and held it to her womb" from where the wine flowed.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis here, as suggested by the words "torrents" and "flooded", is on the creative, productive and overwhelming power of Oya.

A common pattern can be recognized between Soyinka's conception of Oya and the conception of the woman in literary tradition. In other words, Soyinka's practice of associating the woman with inspiration, the moment when the poet's mind is open to the overwhelming power of the Muse or "eternal wisdom", is a recurrent tendency among poets throughout the ages. In the opening lines of the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*, for example, Milton invites the "heavenly-born" Urania, one of the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, to inspire his song. In the passage that follows Milton seems to suggest that Urania, like Oya, is a creative principle in both god and poet:

Descend from heav'n, Urania, by that name  
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine  
Following, above th' Olympian hill I soar.  
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.  
Thou with eternal wisdom didst converse.  
Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play  
In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleased  
With thy celestial song.  
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude: yet not alone while thou  
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn  
Purples the east. Still govern thou my song.

Urania. and fit audience find, though few.<sup>23</sup>

From this passage concerning Milton's prayer to Urania, we move to Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* which, according to Bodkin to whom I owe the inspiration for writing this paper, is essentially concerned with:

...a Power that inspires his song,  
or kindles his vision, figured as a  
maid who sings to him, o as the  
Muse who visits his nightly solitude.<sup>24</sup>

In the poem, the poet has a vision of "an Abyssinian madid" singing of Mount Abora as the played on her dulcimer. The poet expresses his wish to recreate her song in his imagination – if this happens, he too would build a magic pleasure-dome. *Kubla Khan* had done, with gardens watered by the river Alph, the river of the Muses:

Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !<sup>25</sup>

Coleridge, like Soyinka and Milton, looks up to the woman to awaken or sharpen his poetic imagination, his creative powers, now threatened with conflict and extinction. In this connection, we may also want to refer to the tremendous influence Maud Gonne has on Yeats' creative activity. Yeats' description of her recalls Soyinka's image of Oya as a "priestess at fresh shrines"/ "caryatid at the door of sanctuary" :

I had never thought to see in a living woman so great a beauty. It belonged to famous pictures, to poetry, to some legendary past. A complexion like the bloom of apples and yet face and body had the beauty of lineaments which Blake calls the highest beauty because it changes least from youth to old age, and statue so great that she seemed of a divine race.<sup>26</sup>

This passage brings to mind poems such as "When You Are Old", "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" and "He Wishes his Beloved were Dead" in which Maud Gonne is associated with archetypal images: the stars, "the mountains overhead", the heavens, the moon and the sun. In general terms, Yeats gives us to understand, as Petrarch does in relation to Laura, that Maud Gonne is a mythical figure, a goddess, the symbol of the Muse. Her refusal to reciprocate Yeats' love is, in fact, a blessing in disguise considering the fact that she constantly haunts Yeats' dreams and conscious thought, kindling the creative impulse in him. In other words, Maud Gonne is one of the driving forces behind Yeats' poetry. In "Words", for example, Yeats states that now he has "come to [his] strength/And words obey [his] call", thus, had Maud Gonne returned his proposals, he "might have thrown poor words away/And been content to live".<sup>28</sup>

The sort of divine sway Maud Gonne has on Yeats recalls the quickening influence

Beatrice has on Dante. In the poet's own words, she is "a god stronger than I that is come to bear rule over me".<sup>28</sup> Through Beatrice, Dante comes into contact with Grace, Heaven, God. In other words, in *The Divine Comedy*, Beatrice is conceived as the "God-bearing image": she represents, that is, the immanence of God in the creature. In Canto XXXI, Dante offers the following thanks giving prayer to Beatrice, the divine force behind his salvation and creative impulse:

"O thou in whom my hopes securely dwell,  
And who, to bring my soul to Paradise,  
Didst leave the imprint of thy steps in Hell,  
Of all that I have looked on with these eyes  
Thy goodness and thy power have fitted me  
The holiness and grace to recognize.  
Thou hast led me, a slave to liberty,  
By every path, and using every means  
which to fulfil this task were granted thee.  
Keep turned towards me thy munificence,  
So that my soul which thou hast remedied  
May please thee when it quits the bonds of sense".<sup>29</sup>

Collateral to the universal image of the woman as the creative element in God and poet, is the collective or tradition infantile image of the woman as mother, the source of hope on whom the child depends, in time of need, for solace and tender care. Oya, for instance, "earthed", shelters Soyinka from "the sublimating essence of the night". In this vein, Thetis pleads with Zeus for his son, Achilles, and in tears secures for him an armour from Hephaestus. This is also true of Aeneas' mother, Venus, who pleads for his son with Jupiter. Again, on her request, Vulcan her husband fashions an armour for Aeneas.

Our discussion, so far, reveals that 'Idanre' is essentially concerned with the satisfying, radiant and exalting image of the woman. The other universal aspect of the image of the woman as the eternal Eve, man's temptress that we find in the stories of Adam and Eve, Aeneas and Dido, Chaucer's Alison and her husbands, is not described in Soyinka's poem and cannot therefore be discussed in this paper.

We have considered Soyinka's vision of the woman in 'Idanre' as having a collective or universal touch. In the present discussion, we shall examine his vision of Ogun in relation to the vision of God in human history. In other words, the character of the god as revealed in his interaction with men invites comparison with the image of God in literary tradition. The image of Ogun, like that of Oya, is a dynamic one; like Oya, Ogun represents a reality that has its place in a sequence of communicated experience. In the summary of 'Idanre' given at the beginning of this paper, reference was made to the double image of Ogun, the Yorub god: he is a father-servant who 'fulfills the needs of his people, yet he is also a mysterious power, the controller of destiny, tyrannous and destructive. "The nature of God," Vellacott claims, "comprises two elements or principles, one harsh, the other gentle".<sup>30</sup> This double nature of God is also suggested in the conversation between Asia, Panthea and

Demogorgon in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. God is an embodiment of opposing passions: He creates and destroys. He "made the living world" and "all that is contains", "terror, madness, crime, remorse," "love that turns to hate".<sup>31</sup> In 'The Tyger', Blake conceives God's nature in terms of both the fierce, destructive tiger and the tender, humble lamb. The opposed natures of the tiger and the lamb reflect, as it were, the split mind or dual nature of God.

As already indicated, the first phase of 'Idanre' takes up the "gentle", lamb-like aspect of Ogun's nature. In the 'deluge...', Ogun fulfills the needs of his people by creating biological life and by causing rain to fall. The rainfall signals the end of rumours, secret fears and speculations about their future well-being. The joy and satisfaction of the people is expressed in the triumphant, joyful note of the last stanza of the poem:

And no one speaks of secrets in this land  
Only, that the skin be bared to welcome rain And earth prepare, that seeds may swell  
And roots take flesh within her, and men  
Wake naked into harvest-tide.<sup>32</sup>

The images of land cultivation and harvest contained in the above verses, are followed in '...and after' by the images of honeycomb and mining. Aside from cultivating the earth, the people also extract honey and minerals from the land: "And we/Have honeycombed beneath his hills, worked red earth/Of energies, quarrying rare and urgent ores..."<sup>33</sup>

Ogun's loving care is shown as well in his silent night-walk "across a haze of corn": Ogun/Leased his ears with tassels, his foot-prints/Futur turries of the giant root... His head was lost among palm towers".<sup>34</sup> These lines suggest that the god is satisfied with his creation and the good use into which his men are putting it. We are reminded here of the Hebrew God's satisfaction with His creation in Genesis:

And [God] said, Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth. And it was so done.  
And the earth brought forth the green herb, and such as yieldeth seed according to its kind, and the tree that beareth fruit, having seed each one according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.<sup>35</sup>

Ogun's night-walk also impresses on the reader's mind, the idea of an immanent being who not only occasions the world, but continues to consolidate and affect his creation. He is, indeed, the principle of unity pervading the universe, imperceptibly reconciling, as it were, opposing forces:

earth was a surreal bowl  
Of sounds and mystic timbers, his fingers  
Drew warring elements to a union of being  
And taught the veins to dance, of earth, of rock  
Of tree, sky, of fire and rain, of flesh of man  
And woman....

Earth's broken rings were healed.<sup>36</sup>

Here, we have an echo of the passage in 'Tintern Abbey' where Wordsworth describes the "sense sublime", "A motion and a spirit, that impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought./And rolls through all things".<sup>37</sup> According to the passage from Soyinka's poem, Ogun, "the Creative Essence" would be this "sense sublime" that "rolls" in all natural elements, causing them to partake in a joyful dance of harmony.

The joyful harmony that Ogun is capable of generating appears to be the nucleus of the sacrifices to the gods during the harvest season, a time when "Even the gods remember dues". As suggested earlier, during the sacrifices, the gods and the ancestors, that is, "The dead whom fruit and oil await",<sup>38</sup> enjoy a state of communion and fellowship:

And they moved towards resorption in His alloy essence  
Primed to a fusion, primed to the sun's dispersion  
Containment and communion, seed-time and harvest, palm  
And pylon, Ogun's road a 'Modius' orbit, kernel  
And electrons, wine to alchemy.<sup>39</sup>

In all this, Ogun is seen as a graceful, just and charitable being who fuses indiscriminately with all aspects of his creation, filling them with equal bliss. He is a friend, a loving father who generously responds to the needs of his creatures, who, in the words of Wordsworth in 'Hart-leap Well', "Maintains a deep and reverential care/For the unoffending creatures whom he loves".<sup>40</sup> The New Testament story of the vicarious sufferings of Christ (God) comes to mind here. According to the Gospel Story, Christ, out of love and compassion for man, gave up His kingly crown and took the human form. While on earth, he identified with and catered for the needs of all men, including the outcasts of society: he fed the hungry and the poor; he comforted and healed the sick. Finally, he shed his blood to save man from eternal damnation. In the opening lines of book one of *Paradise Lost*, Milton refers to Christ as the "one greater Man/[who] Restore us and regain the blissful seat".<sup>41</sup> Here, as in Soyinka's poem, we again have the image of God as a life-giving force that animates the world and shows concern for man's salvation and happiness.

The same kind of vision of God is taken up by Dante in *The Divine Comedy: Paradise*. As the pilgrim, through the illuminating tenderness of Beatrice, communes with the blessed spirits he encounters in the various circles of heaven, he comes to understand the fullness of God's love and tender care of man. Here, Dante is surrounded by a vast ocean of light and flame: "... I saw a blaze on me so vast a sphere/fired by the sun, that never rain nor streams/ Formed such a huge illimitable mere".<sup>42</sup> This light, which is God, penetrates all the spirits in heaven. Beatrice, for example, tells Dante that "... Providence... integrates the whole", that is, "All beings great and small/ Are linked in order; and this orderliness/ is form, which stamps God's likeness on the All."<sup>43</sup> The light that penetrates the ten circles of heaven, clearly suggest that God is a just being whose blessings and loving care are equally enjoyed by all the spirits, no matter the circle to which they belong. This conception of God is made lucid by Piccarda dei Donati whose allotted sphere is the moon, the lowest region of heaven. With "such joy", she tells Dante that she and all the spirits who share the lowest or "slowest

sphere" are "blessed too": they are as happy as they can possibly be: "The sole good-pleasure of the Holy Ghost/Kindles [their] hearts, which joyously espouse./ Informed by Him, whate'er delights Him most." After listening to her story, the pilgrim concludes:

Then I saw plain how Heav'n is everywhere  
Paradise, though the grace of the First Good  
Falls differently in different regions there.<sup>44</sup>

We recognize here that, like Soyinka's Ogun, Dante's God is seen in terms of justice, tenderness and fulfillment. He sustains man and his values are universal.

Following closely on our discussion of the gentle aura of God, is the background against which He is described. What I have in mind here is the age-old idea of the mountain or hill as the abode of the deity from whose colossal height He pours forth His blessings upon the world. The psychology behind this tendency to associate God with the mountain is clear. God, the highest essence imaginable, the source of all that there is, the Causeless Cause, the Unmoved Mover of the things, would normally be imagined as inhabiting the heights whose dominating and majestic size, offers inestimable protection. Mountains and hills that are known to have outlived generations are therefore fitting abodes for gods. In *The Divine Comedy*, for example, Dante imagines Purgatory as a lofty mountain on whose seven cornices the souls are purged successively of the seven deadly sins, and so made fit to ascend into the presence of God in Paradise. As the pilgrim ascends the ten Heavens, he experiences an ever-mounting joy and blessedness, and so grows in understanding. Understanding here would be associated with heavenly height, while folly and evil would go along with abysmal depth. Satan and his crew, for example, are:

Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky  
With hideous ruin and combustion down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamant chains and penal fire  
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.<sup>45</sup>

In the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, Milton invokes the aid of the "Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top/of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire" Moses.<sup>46</sup> We have already referred to Milton's association of Urania with the heights of Heaven and to Coleridge's Mount Abora, the haunt of the Muses. Again, in *Exodus XXX*, God, the rescuer and protector of Israel, speaks to Moses from Mount Sinai.<sup>47</sup> Homer also pictures Mount Olympus as:

the reputed seat  
Eternal of the Gods, which never storms  
Disturb, rains drench, or snow invades, but calm  
The expanse and cloudless shines with purest day.<sup>48</sup>

The mountain home of God is pictured by poets in the above discussion as a place of glory, blessedness, changelessness and ease. On the mountain, the poet enjoys tranquility and comes into contact with the clear light of understanding. This conception of the abode of the gods also finds expression in 'Idanre'. It will be recalled that one of the experiences that inspired the writing of the poem, was Soyinka's "visit to the rockhills of that name".<sup>49</sup> the

home of Ogun, described as "terraced hills self-surmounting to the skies".<sup>53</sup> Throughout the poem, Idanre is associated with peace, rest and understanding. After creating biological life, Ogun retires to the heights, where he and the poet are joined by Oya. In view of the consequences of Atooda's rebellion and man's desecration of the shrines, "Wordlessly he rose, sought knowledge in the hills/Ogun the lone one saw it all, the secret/Veins of matter".<sup>54</sup> Having made weapons for men, Ogun "sought retreat in the heights," for "Idanre granite offered peace".<sup>55</sup>

So much for the gentle, fatherly aspect of God's nature as it appears in 'Idanre' and in literary tradition. The other image of Ogun – which again parallels the image of God in human experience – has to do with his harshness. The poet contends that "Ogun's road [is] a 'Mobius' orbit"<sup>56</sup> in the sense that he is many-sided, an embodiment of "contradictions".<sup>57</sup> As seen in an earlier discussion, Ogun does not always act as the "shield of orphans", as an ally and saviour of his people. He is capable of turning against his people and destroying them, thus acting as a threat, an alien, vengeful being, unconcerned with man's plight. Let us look at what happens.

Ogun prepares for war by fashioning weapons for his men: "In his hand the Weapon/Gleamed, born of the primal mechanic".<sup>58</sup> After this exercise, he retreats to the hills, declining "the crown of deities" because men are desecrating the shrines, a clear proof that they are losing faith in the deity. However, through the intervention of "the elders of Ire", Ogun, "king and warlord", descends to lead his people in battle. Being a "Lascivious god" who takes two gourdlets of palmwine to war, Ogun gets drunk and blindly slaughters the men he is expected to shield from the sword of the enemy. The monstrosity and thorny anger of the god are vividly captured in the following lines:

He strides sweat encrusted  
Bristles on risen tendons  
Porcupine and barbed. Again the turns  
Into his men, a butcher's axe  
Rises and sink.<sup>59</sup>

The wailing of frightened women, from whose heads "ripe melons tumble", fall on the "deafened" ears of Ogun: "Lust-blind god, gore-drunk Hunter/Monster deity, you destroy your men!"<sup>60</sup> In fact, he persists in murdering his men till his "wine-logged" eyes cleared. At this point, as his "Passion slowly yielded to remorse", "the Hunter stayed his hand".<sup>61</sup>

This threatening aspect of God's image is also shown in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* in which God is pictured as a revengeful and tyrannical force that generates fear and pain. Milton, for example, describes the "bottomless perdition", into which God hurled Satan and his crew, as a "fiery gulf".

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe.



Regions of sorrow, doleful shades where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all; but torture without end  
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.<sup>50</sup>

In Aeschylus' play, Chorus describes Zeus as tyrannical and "cruelhearted enough" because the god finds joy in the suffering of Prometheus. Zeus causes Prometheus to be "bound hand and foot...in strong straps" to a "desolate peak" because he championed the cause of the human race. He stole fire from heaven and gave it to men and taught them the basic mental and manual skills. In doing so, he frustrated Zeus' plan to create a more perfect race. Prometheus tells his own story to Chorus in words which lucidly suggest that Zeus is harsh:

Now, for your question, on what charge Zeus tortures me,  
 I'll tell you. On succeeding to his father's throne  
 At once he appointed various rights to various gods,  
 Giving to each his set place and authority.  
 Of wretched humans he took no account, resolved  
 To annihilate them and create another race.  
 This purpose there was no one to oppose but I:  
 I dared. I saved the human race from being ground  
 To dust, from total death.  
 For that I am subjected to these bitter pains –  
 Agony to endure, heart-rending to behold.<sup>51</sup>

What is true of Aeschylus' Zeus, is equally true of Shelley's Jupiter who is described by Prometheus as a "fierce", "all-conquering foe", reigning "Superme....with the groans of pining slaves". Earth, associating the god with thunder, echoes Prometheus' remarks by referring to Jove as "our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread".<sup>51</sup> For Thomas Hardy, man's life is "a thwarting purposing": it is characterised by futility, despair and isolation because it is imposed upon by the "immanent Will". William Blake describes the "Abstract God" of the Anglican Prayer Book in the following terms:

"...he is Righteous, he is not a  
 Being of Pity & Compassion.  
 "He cannot feel Distress, he feeds on  
 Sacrifice & Offering.  
 "Delighting in cries & tears, & clothed in holiness & solitude."<sup>52</sup>

In the reference we have had so far, we notice that our authors in common conceive their gods in terms of wrath which they manifest when their authority is questioned. Ogun, for example, is angry because of men's desecration of shrines that symbolize the supremacy of the Yoruba gods. Milton's God, Aeschylus' Zeus and Shelley's Jupiter are angry with their victims for challenging their sovereignty. These writers aptly impress the wrathful nature of their gods on the reader's imagination by associating them with such concrete objects and forces of destruction as thorns, axes, spikes, fire, thunder, sulphur and chain.

In view of the hostile, thwarting aspect of Ogun's nature, the respect he once commanded among his people gives way to contempt for the god and doubts in regard to whether he is, indeed, the "shield of orphans". Notice the invective language used in describing the god. He is variously described as a "Murderer", "monster", "lust-blind god", "gore-drunk Hunter", "butcher", "cannibal", "Divine outcast", and so on. This experience seems to give rise to conclusions concerning man's capabilities. Man must concern himself with the earth, with the here's and now's not with the supernatural; he must have his "root in earth", rather than have faith in a transcendental being who turns round in anger and destroys his own people. The poet ridicules men for inviting Ogun to help them fight a cause they can themselves handle with ease.

Because the rodent nibbled somewhat at his yam.

The farmer hired a hunter, filled him with wine

And thrust a firebrand in his band

We do not burn the woods to trap

A squirrel ;we do not ask the mountain's

Aid, to crack a walnut.<sup>63</sup>

Why must the people count on a blind god instead of relying on their own abilities? In other words, by sticking neurotically to a deity who is a "Prestiditator", a simple magician, men tend to neglect their own powers. Like Ogun, men are also capable of performing conjuring tricks. Like men, Ogun is lecherous, murderous and gets drunk. Ogun is therefore no better than men. "God", in the words of John Dunne, "is the unknown in a story of man, while man is the unknown in the story of God".<sup>64</sup> For Dunne, God is insight, a realization that man in spirit and flesh. Spirit "consists of a man's relationship to the things of his life: flesh. ... consists of the things themselves."<sup>65</sup> The point here is that, the world has no outside: the people's power is not continuous with an invisible force outside them. Indeed, it is out of fear that men created and continue to preserve the gods. God simply exists in our minds: God is the tempering or inner voice of "Reason or Conscience",<sup>66</sup> that reminds man of what Blake calls "Moral Virtues" and deters him from destructive propensities - "All deities reside in the human breast."<sup>67</sup> God, to use Dunne's terminology, is the "new man" who does not wait idly for Godot to come, but who is creative and possesses a spirit or a will big enough to embrace the world, to move the continent of America to Africa.

In 'harvest' where the people and Ogun reconcile and appear to live in harmony once more after the bloody event, the poet warns men against the dangers of maintaining a pact with Ogun. The carnage will recur if they insist, for "Ogun's road is a 'Mobius' orbit", bloody go-round.

In 'Idanre' then, Soyinka's kind of dispenses with the gods, as Thales of Miletus had done several centuries before him, as sources of explanation of natural or social phenomena. Man must be explained in terms of himself and nature in terms of itself. By questioning the power of the gods to help men and as explanatory devices, Soyinka, like Thales, neutralizes them and undermines their social effectiveness.

What we become tomorrow depends on the choices we make now, not on our

knowledge of ever-lasting life or eternal truths. For Jean-Paul Sartre:

Man is nothing else but what he makes himself... there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be.... man is responsible for what he is.<sup>58</sup>

A recognition of this fact is essential for development. If the people hold fast to the demands of Ogun, their attention and energies will be diverted from secular concerns, from the changes that are necessary for their development and for delivering them from pauperism, poverty and depression. Society is in a permanent state of motion, which motion is indispensable to growth and progress. In other words, society constantly loses a set of new ones. In view of this fact, Atunda, who rebelled against the father-god by rolling "the Boulder" onto him, must be revered and canonized for his "assertive act":

...may we celebrate the stray electron, defiant  
Of patterns, celebrate the splitting of the gods  
Canonisation of the strong hand of a slave who set  
The rock in revolution – and the Boulder cannot  
Up the hill in time's unwind.

...

All hail Saint Atunda, First revolutionary

Grand iconoclast at genesis – and the rest in logic Zeus, Osiris, Jahweh....<sup>59</sup>

Roscoe rightly observes that Atunda's act creates a "variety of patterns" within a harmonious or unified state of things.<sup>70</sup> To this we may also add that Atunda's "defiant" act, in fact, questions the very extent to which gods respond to man's immediate needs. The fact that he was a "slave to [the] first deity" would bear on the argument that the gods are harsh and cruel.

I have attempted in this paper, to show that, though Wole Soyinka's "Idanre" is a typical Yoruba or African poem, it draws on recurrent patterns of human experience. In other words, the poet anoints his poem with universalist flavouring without becoming alienated from his own immediate society, from the concrete reality of his people and their struggle. Oya and Ogun are, no doubt, specific to the Yoruba experience, yet, their natures and roles, as defined in the poem, are reminiscent of the image-pattern of the woman and god in other literatures, ages and cultures. Soyinka's portrayal of the woman as the creative element in both the god and the poet: as the source of solace and comfort, together with his insight into the double nature of god, reverberates, as it were, man's collective experience.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Wole Soyinka, *Idanre And Other Poems*, (London: Methuen, 1969), p.86.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p.87.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.69.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.70.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.85.

<sup>10</sup>A. Norman Jeffares, 'Introduction' to *W.B. Yeats: Selected Poetry*, (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.xviii.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted by Maud Bobkin in *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.155

<sup>12</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.83.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p.57.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp.57-58.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.57.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.66.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.67.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p.63.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.63.

<sup>23</sup>Milton: *Poetical Works*, ed., Douglas Bush, (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.340-41.

<sup>24</sup>Maun Bodkin, *op.cit.*, p.153.

<sup>25</sup>Coleridge: *Poetical Works*, ed., Ernest Hartley Coleridge, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.298-99

<sup>26</sup>A. Norman Jeffares, *W.B. Yeats: Man and Poet*, (London: Richard Clay, 1966 ), pp.59-60.

<sup>27</sup>Op.cit., p.44.

<sup>28</sup>Dorothy L. Sayers, 'Introduction' to Dante's *The Divine Comedy: Hell*, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.26.

<sup>29</sup>Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Paradise*, trans., Dorothy Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) p.329

<sup>30</sup>Philip Vellacott, 'Introduction' to Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound, The Suppliants, Seven Against Thebes, The Persians*, trans., (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.7.

<sup>31</sup>*Shelley's Longer Poems. Plays And Translations*, ed. A.H. Koszul, (London: J.M. Dent, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1953), pp.181-82.

<sup>32</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.64.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp.63-64.

<sup>35</sup>*The Holy Bible*. Revised Standard Version, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1952), 'Genesis' 1, Vs.11-12, p.1.

<sup>36</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, p.68.

<sup>37</sup>*Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed., Thomas Hutchinson, a new edition revised by Ernest de Selincourt, (London, Oxford, Toronto: 1965), p.164.

<sup>38</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, p.65.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.85.

<sup>40</sup>Wordsworth, *op.cit.*, p.161.

<sup>41</sup>Milton, *op.cit.*, p.212.

<sup>42</sup>Dante, *op.cit.*, Canto 1, p.55.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.56,

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Canto III, pp.73-75.

<sup>45</sup>Milton, *op.cit.*, p.213.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p.212.

<sup>47</sup>*The Holy Bible*, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>48</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans., William Cowper, (London: J.M. Dent, New York: E.P. Utton, 1947), VI, p.85.

<sup>49</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.* p.57.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p.72.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p.70.

- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 85.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 88.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 75.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 75.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>59</sup>Milton, *op.cit* pp.213-14.
- <sup>60</sup>Aeschylus, *op.cit.* pp.25-28.
- <sup>61</sup>Shelley, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-53.
- <sup>62</sup>*Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed., Geoffrey Keynes, (London: The Nonesuch Library, 1975), *Jerusalem*, P. I.10, 11. 47-49, p. 443.
- <sup>63</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, pp.72-73.
- <sup>64</sup>John S. Dunne, *Time and Myth*, (London: SCM Press, 1979), p.113.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p.89.
- <sup>66</sup>Bodkin, *op.cit.*, p.256.
- <sup>67</sup>Blake, *op.cit.*, 'MHH' p.185.
- <sup>68</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism', in *Quartet*, ed., Harold P. Simonson, (New York Evanston London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970), p.799.
- <sup>69</sup>Soyinka, *op.cit.*, pp.82-83.
- <sup>70</sup>Adrian A. Roscoe, *Mother is God: A Study in West African Literature*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.61.

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# Euclid's First Proposition and Joyce's Womb with a View

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As the only diagram in *Finnegans Wake* (II: 2), the emended illustration of Euclid's first proposition has naturally invited and received considerable interpretive commentary. Motivated by the desire to get to the bottom of things, readings have pursued a narrow stratum of inquiry, knowingly excluding the diametrically opposed versions that usually present themselves in Joyce's text. Such readings have proven "correct" within self-imposed limitations, yet in the process have reaffirmed the coexistence in the *Wake* of paired opposites, of seen and unseen. Most commentary has been reserved for the shadowy doubling of Euclid's inscribed triangle or especially for the intersecting circles which have inspired an inventory of conjectural shapes, from lassies in arm to a vicocyclometer of eons. The almond-shaped space that emerges as a result of intersection – a secondary space of remainder – has received less attention, although suggested comparison with the mystical *vesica piscis* of Christ can be provocative when taken to its mythological roots as a prism on the world.<sup>1</sup> I propose to trace those roots. For convenience, examples of symbolic geometry are adduced from the two most influential myth families in Western culture, Semitic and Indo-Aryan.

From Plato's geometrical relations as properties of ideal objects to Kant's synthetic *a priori*, the Western tradition of philosophical rationalism had insisted that all knowledge should be constructed after the pattern of geometry. This was to privilege Euclid whose initial assumptions, derived by purely deductive method, were supposedly unquestionable – until the mid-nineteenth century when non-Euclidean geometry began to reveal that space is not a form of order by which the human observer constructs his world. What a philosopher-mathematician may regard as a law of reason is actually a conditioning of imagination by the physical structure of environment; the power of reason stems from the inheres in the ability to free the mind from rules established through experience and tradition: "you must, in undivided reality draw the line somewhere." From Euclid's surveyor John Dee *FW* 299: 21) to the neo-Kantian conventionalism of Henri Poincare and Einsteinian relativity – in which the natural geometry of space in astronomic dimensions is non-Euclidean (*FW* 293: 4; 304: 25) – the context of the *Wake* shakes loose the accretions of presumed Euclidean certainty. It restores the considerable debt of Euclidean geometry to the Pythagorean mysticism of numbers and to Platonic metaphysics (see "Jyoclid" 's Platonic Year, *FW* 282: 23; 292: 30).

Drawing on the Sumerian and Babylonian association of the decade (as a "limit" number) with the beginning and close of an eon of time, Pythagoras raised the basic division

of odd and even numbers to a cosmic understanding of Same (unity) and Other (duality) – given a Yeatsian cast on *FW* 300: 20-23. The relationship he established between the denary and tetrad ( $1+2+3+4=10$ ) was played on by early gnostic and hermetic Christian for the transformation of the Roman X into a new era (“aosch,” *FW* 282: 2), as Eva is reversed to Ave, in which all directions, all pairs of opposites will be lodged and reconciled at one point in time. In this scheme, 1 is the logograph for unity, the disembodied principle of numbering, whereas 2 represents the potential for the extension of numerical principle and relationship to the dimensions of the material world. Euclid’s proposition begins “*Protasis*” on a given finite straight line to construct an equilateral triangle.” for 3 is the first number – as A-L-P define the three points of a surface – with a beginning, middle and end: “Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle’s to be.” The “mamafesta” itself locates Pythagoras in an anamorphic mirror where his weighty pronouncements are reduced to the grunts (“...uggamyg...”) of primeval couples: “So hath been, love: tis tis: and will be” (*FW* 116: 30-36). The 1-2-3 of Pythagoras corresponds in cabalism to the primary unity of Aleph, realization of duality in Beth, and Gimel as the hieroglyph of rebirth into a new order of time: “MacAuliffe... MacBeth... MacGhimley” (*FW* 290: 6-7).

Notably in the *Timaeus*, Plato reveals his Pythagorean learning by proposing a model for the soul comprised of the reconciled opposition of active and passive attributes (which is also filtered through Yeats on *FW* 300: 20-23). As Plato’s prime interlocutor asserts, it is actually two sorts of triangles that constitute the universal elements and the template for the Good, True and Beautiful in the fashioning of the material world by form and number. For Macrobius and other commentators, this was the origin of the Platonic *lambda* (*FW* 294: 4: 297: 10), by which two legs of an open cone descend from the monadal point of a pair of calipers showing, on the one leg, the arithmetical progression from 2 and, on the other, geometrical progression from 3. Most interesting – for the almond (or vulva [*FW* 297: 27]) form and for the Joycean emphasis on the spinning roles of the *tergmina* Heavenly Mother, Great Earth Mother and Femme Fatale alike<sup>2</sup> – is the hypothesis of *Timaeus* that the circles of heaven and the zodiac revolve uniformly around a diamond spindle at the core of the universe by which all of the planetary orbits are measured and, thus, from which all human fates are conceived and spun out.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the triangle and kindred geometric shapes have lent themselves to calculations of practical geometry: in measuring angles between two distant objects, sighting is made through a magnifying lens attached to a sextant or similar framing instrument, so that light rays traveling from objects to the sighting device may be used to define the sides of a triangle. At the same time, triangular shapes have lent themselves to the speculative geometry of metaphysical trinities in which the natural language for articulating the ineffable is the universal imagery of mythology: “On the name of the tizzer and off the tongs and off the mythametrical tripods” (*FW* 186: 23-24).

Only the language of myth abides and flourishes in the coexistence of contrary propositions, of sacred and profane: can synthesize monochrome readings of 11: 2 offered seriatim by Joyce criticism: and can simultaneously embrace the property of Wakean

language through which any assured reading automatically presumes the validity of a contrary proposition. For instance, just after the Euclidean design we encounter "old Sare Isaac's universal of specious arismystic" (293: 27-28) and the "loose corollaries ever Ellis threw his cookingclass" (294:7-8). Blending Issac the father of Jacob with Newton the father of gravitational laws and particle theory of light rays sustains the chapter's characteristic amalgam of "science" with theology, fantasy and legend: "Dawn gives rise ... Eve takes fall" (293: 30-31). The second fragment weds Alice and the author of *Algebra Identified with Geometry*. The balance of this essay will probe the mythopoeic logic of the intersectional space housing the triangles in order to trace the basis on which disparate cultures find common cause in a universal mythic image: at the same time, it will subvert prospects for final attribution or localizing of mythogenesis.

The conjectural attributions to the *vesica piscis* of the almond-like interstice/*ricorso* between circling eons in the Euclidean proposition are reinforced by textual echoes (297: 6; 299: 34) and by the association with the Second Coming. The importance of the attribution is not just that it fits the motif of incarnation, death and resurrection which threads through Joyce's chapter from one end to the other: but also that it enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Middle ages, that it joined Christian and pagan stories with ease, and that its originary rationale was lost at an early date to the minds of the artists and artisans who plied its polymorphous forms. In fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tuscany alone, the churches of Siena, Pisa and Florence abound with Christs housed in the twin circles in infinity, in the *mandorla* (It. "almond"), and in a diamond superposed on four intersecting circles, as in Taddeo Gaddi's paintings in the Academia or on Ghiberti's Baptistery doors. In many of these instances, as on the tympanum of the "Sunset" portal of Chartres Cathedral, Christ of the Apocalypse is attended by the symbols of the zodiac or – which is much the samething – by the four gospeists whose symbols correspond to the stations at the quadrants of the zodiac. And most provocative of all are the Vatican Pinacoteca's Peruginos in which Christ in the *mandorla* sits in majesty above a squared circle.

By the late Romanesque florescence in Normandy and North Armorica sculptors had forgotten that the *mandorla* originated in early Byzantine renditions of the Son of God crowned by a squared-circle halo, a common symbolic expression for the marriage of the circular heaven with the four directions of earth: "One recalls Byzantium. The mystery repeats itself to date" (*FW* 294: 28-29)<sup>4</sup>. There is a lesson to be learned here about the risky business of attributing mythic origins outside of a specific cultural tradition. For the *hierosgamos* wedding the four corners of earth with the zodiac wheeling eternally around Polaris – consummated through sexualized ritual of renewal at the apex of a pyramid – takes us back at least to the ziggurats of ancient Sumer in the fourth millennium B.C. But so too does the lore of the Djed-pillar of Osiris ("Le hêlos tombaut," *FW* 280: 25). In the principal tale of this myth, the primeval couple Isis and her brother-consort Osiris are separated when the latter is imprisoned in a coffin by 72 assailants (72: the number of years required for the precession of the equinoxes to move one degree) which was ultimately lodged in the base of a Tree of Life, symbolizing the world Mountain Mother – tree (HCE)



and stone (ALP) alike – which eats back into the earth the life it has borne.

The Tree of Life is symbolized in the lifeless stone of the Djed-pillar: at the juncture of rectangular world with solar sphere are a pair of almond eyes for sight beyond life's illusory pairs of opposite qualities, surmounted by interlocking ram and cow horns (symbolic of the sexes in union, as of death and life), which in turn cradle the sun. It is the conical rays of the sun that protect the slumbering Osiris. Following the *sparagmos* of the missing sun god, Isis goes in search of her lord who is restored intact, except that his penis has been devoured by a fish. Osiris returns to his glory as judge of the quick and the dead after the exchange of the testicle of Seth for the left eye of Horus – the two contending sons of Osiris (cf. Odin who is protected by the Sophia-like Volva, sacrifices his left eye, and hangs for 9 days on the World Tree Yggdrasil). The hieroglyph for the circle of the iris with the pupil as center (*wadza*) is known as "the sun in the mouth" (or the creative Word). Thus, on classical papyri Osiris is attended by the four sons of Horus riding atop the corolla of a water lily, the mythic image – like the Hindu lotus or Christian rose – of the matrix from which all incarnate life is made flesh: "la rose in che 'I verbo divino carne si fece" (cf. *FW* 292).

This complete mythic symbology operates with great complexity – amid elm, stone, almond forms and four gospelists – throughout the *Wake* (e.g., pp. 94, 234-35). Horus is outfitted with the head of the sun-hawk and the tail of a bull, for daily he is the ever-dying, ever-reborn sun and hence is identified with the father in various ways (*FW* 328: 34); for one, since he is apparently regenerated spontaneously, he is known (as was Pharaoh) as the "bull of his own mother." Likewise the Mesopotamian moon god Sin mediated the wedding of earth and sun, and thus was endowed with exceptional procreative powers. His attributes are, then, the intersecting earthly and heavenly triangles of "fire and water" in addition to "strong horns" which cast the reflection of intersecting arcs, in token of the waxing and waning lunar phases (*FW* 212: 25-26; 365: 09-10); thus, he is known as "mother womb, begetter of all things." The companion scene in the *Wake* occurs toward the end when all-wise ALP, beneath the nimbus of "the clothing moon" tells of the march of the constellations and of how she came armed with the elixir of life (urine or beer) to console her old man, beset by "emotional volvular," in his guardroom confinement. Amid fractured references to Crimea, the history of Ireland and England, peace symbols, Isis and Osiris (after HCE produces his "propendiculous loadpoker"), ALP's inquisitor intones "Let Eivin be member for Gates of Gold for their fadeless suns betrayed: her. Irise. Osirises! Be thy mouth given unto thee" (493: 27-28). Soon after, HCE lies in state but elevated to the status of world figure, amid his splendid titles and holdings, including "Jordan almonders" (497: 31).

Clearly, an attempt to restore the Christian *mandorla* to its quasi-official source in the hierogamy of square and circle in the Byzantine aureole – the intersection of all moments of time and all points of space – simply mimics the continual transposition and variations-on-theme that have characterized mythopoeic logic since the earliest strata of the *Rig Veda*. Joyce geometrically complicates the inextricable problem. An obvious and significant

limiting context for close scrutiny would be the passage in 11: 2 from Issy's footnote, following her professor's analysis of sex and politics, until chapter's end (pp. 279-308): i.e., we handily begin at the interstice between the two major study periods. The daughter at once of ALP and Eve, Issy in her private note purportedly deals with her budding sexual urges ("wait till spring has sprung ...." 279: 22), but her language anticipates the metaphysical implications of the geometry lesson: "Quick erit faciofacey (Q.E.F.). When we will conjugate ... verbe de vie and verve de vie." At the outset the note is placed against the backdrop of "the thrills and ills of laylock blossoms." The scenic detail and its context require several initial observations, which inform the balance of the study of Triv and Quad. First, the question of conjugating the Logos through the incarnation of Spirit and flesh poses the fundamental theological and metaphysical problem of the chapter, one that reverberates through the *Wake* in jest ("Hasitatense?" 296: 36 [hesitancy]) as well as solemn earnest ("DIVINITY NOT DEITY...inexcissible as thy by God ways." 282: 285: 33-34). Shortly before the first formulation in the Byzantine Church of the square-plus-circle *mandorla* of Christ, the argument raged in gnostic and proto-hermetic sects on the immanence of God's Word and on the legibility and understanding of the Creator's writing in the *liber mundi*. In the thick of this controversy, Justin Martyr cited the lesson that Pythagoras had supposedly learned in Egypt: "God is one. And He is not, as some think, outside the world, but in it, for He is entirely in the whole circle looking over all generations."<sup>7</sup> The ambivalent description of godhead leaves us between mysticism – tracking the penumbral traces of a deity who inhabits the humblest objects but whose essence is best known by the evidence of its absence – and empiricism – puzzling through rules of order and solving the geometry conceived the *now*s of the masterbuilder and illustrated according to weight, shape and measure.

A second observation on Issy's footnote setting not only underscores the pervasiveness and mutations of the lilac blossom in the linguistic subtlety of the pubescent footnotes:<sup>8</sup> but from cover to cover it also substantializes the legendary fall and scandalous arrest of HCE, beset by the devil in the flesh ("There are 29 sweet reasons why blossomtime's the best. Elders fall for green almonds when they're raised on bruised stone... (*FW* 64: 36), and the dart of desire at the end (*FW* 599-600) that "has gored the heart of secret waters," thus precipitating the regeneration of life and the cycle of eons. In the latter episode, "the old man of the sea and the old woman in the sky," Father Time and Mother Space rejoin in the images of rock slab and almond tree ("There an alomdree begins to green," *FW* 600: 20; cf. 293: 24) to renew the world of forms. The almond (blossom) is an archaic symbol of divine immanence and rebirth in Near-Eastern mystery religions and in matrilineal cults of the Great Mother throughout the Fertile Crescent. The dying god Attis, for instance, was the son of Cybele in her generalized and divine aspect and of his particular mother, the virginal Nana, who conceived by placing ripe almond (or a pomegranate in some versions, like Persephone) in her bosom.<sup>9</sup> But it is in Hebrew texts where tree and stone figure most prominently.

The ritualized description of the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25: 33-34 reaches to a folkloric stratum in the oral tradition of the *Habiru* which is much older than the books

of laws. There the proper disposition of almond cups around the seven-branch candelabra is prescribed, but is obviously more recent than later instances, such as the rod of Aaron which sprouted almond blossoms as a sign of his election as well as a death threat for those who might break Yahweh's laws (Numbers 17: 8-10). It was the rod of Aaron, not that of Moses, which was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, together with the Tables of the Law and the pot of manna (Heb. 9: 4). Like the Babylonian serpent god who was deposed in Eden but who persistently grew from the staffs of Hebrew leaders as a trace of early ophidian worship and was eventually pictured hanging from a cross (Exod. 4: 2-4; 17: 1-7; Num. 21: 5-9; 11 Kings 18: 4; *FW* 289: 7), emergence from a branch as a sign of God's wrath or benevolence belongs to a familiar, ancient typology. Threat and benefaction are simultaneously assured much later in God's election of Jeremiah who, on seeing a branch of the flowering almond tree, hears the voice of the Lord: "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it" (Jer. 1: 11-12). Both overseer and judge, here Yahweh puns significantly on the phonic resemblances (shaqedh/shoqedh...) among the words for *almond*, *perception* and *awakening*, since the almond tree was the first to bloom in the spring.

But by far the most important mention in Hebrew lore of the shape and properties of the almond is also a unifying knot for many disparate illusions in 11: 2 and elsewhere. Genesis 28: 17-19 is a fundamental text for establishing the affiliation of the patriarchs and kings from Noah to Solomon in the margin of *FW* 307. That Biblical passage relates the epiphany of God to the dreaming Jacob who, on awakening, proclaimed "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" – a common mythic image-term for the paradoxical point of passage from one mode of being to a qualitatively different one. Jacob then anointed a pyramidal pillar of stone with oil: "He called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of the city was Luz at the first."<sup>10</sup> Bab-llu, "Gate of Heaven," in Hebraic tradition became synonymous with confusion and arrogance: the Babylon recension of Eastern (sunrise) and Western (sunset) gates is also the origin of Penelope's gates of the dream in *Odyssey* 19: 562. The mysterious indigo city of Luz, the mythical forerunner of Beth-El and eventually Bethlehem, derives from another Hebrew word meaning 'almond,' "blossoming almond tree," and by extrapolation the almond nut itself which reveals its fruit at the same time that it hides its essence and safeguards its inviolacy: "doubleviewed seeds" (*FW* 296: 1), as it were: hence, the almond tree has come to symbolize the Holy Virgin.<sup>11</sup> Coincidence of corner stone and tree originates (and here the dim recesses of folklore hardly authorize such as assertive verb) from the legends of the proximity of the City to an almond tree whose bark was so bone-like that the Angel of Death could penetrate neither walls nor wood (*lignum vitae*). The conjectural etymology of *Luz* ties it variously to infinitesimal corporeality (represented symbolically by hard bone (Ezekiel: "Son of man, can these bones live?")) which adheres to the soul after death and assists in resurrection<sup>12</sup>; and it seems to derive from the root of a tree where the horizon mediates between the downward and upward directions of the apexes – as in the triangular Fire (*Chokmah*) and Water (*Binah*) of the cabala. Simultaneous emphasis in the legend of *Luz* on the manifest

and the hidden is essential, in as much as a hollow near the base of the tree allows entry into a cave which in turn is the lone access to the City buried in Mother Earth. This detail has been instrumental in the formulation of theologies of the resurrection of fallen man, of reversal of the established order, and of the reflection of the celestial in the subterranean (e.g., Daniel 12: 2-10; 1 Cor. 15: 42-49). It also takes the mythological imagery of Genesis 28 into areas that both diffuse and center otherwise inexplicable mythic allusions in 11: 2. According to medieval "legends of the cross," the X of Christ (XPI) stemmed from the Tree of Knowledge, so that the agency of the Fall became that of redemption; Adam's skull was supposed to have been buried on Golgotha, "the place of the skull." One could argue, then, that the "Interplay of Bones in the Womb" in the margin just below Joyce's Euclidean figure with its almond space, generative of innumerable meanings, might be associated with the *os crucis* located behind the uterus; if so, it thus informs our understanding of the crossed bones beneath the illustration of the cabalistic Great Father at the close of 11: 2.

The problem and mystery of attribution of the *mandorla* – whether in its use as all-seeing eye or all-bearing womb – is that the image and related sacred narrative are of worldwide diffusion and recede to time out of mind: examples of "doubleblends joined" are ready at hand from all quarters. The City beneath the Tree of Life belongs to the larger class of narratives catalogued in *The Golden Bough* where an *axis mundi* is endowed with numinous presence. To the degree that the diamond can be viewed as a stylized *mandorla*, as the wedding of square and circle of Joyce's inset double triangle would suggest, the North American Indian legends become germane in which the first parents issued through the hollow trunk of a venerated tree from their subterranean birth vault. Erich Neumann cites numerous neolithic female figurines from matriarchal Thrace and Crete whose unifying characteristic is a pair of diamond shapes with apexes tangent at the vulva or womb.<sup>13</sup> The Cretan example is instructive since the double axe blades (*labrys*), intersecting to reproduce a *mandorla* as do Euclid's circles, symbolized the Great Goddess whose hegemony was evinced by her control of the lunar rhythms (cf. *FW* 244: 5: 485: 26) and mastery of the subterranean labyrinth.

In the Western tradition some of these legends have had an immense longevity due to the adaptability of their mythic imagery. Such is the Phrygian tale of the All-Father Amygdalos (almond tree) who harbored "the perfect fruit pulsating and stirring in the depths" and who gave birth to the "invisible, thousand-eyed unnameable One." Secreted like Moses amid the roots from which all life springs, and affiliated with the Logos and *pneuma* of the Annunciation, it was natural for early Christians to see in him the "mustard-seed, the invisible point ... which none know save the spiritual alone."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Greeks of Indo-Aryan provenance synthesized the mythology of the archaic mother cult attached to Aphrodite, the Ewig-Weibliche (cf. *FW* 116: 36-117: 1). Like the yarn-spinning Penelope, the web-weaving Eve ("madameen spinning watersilts," *FW* 21: 6) and the Virgin who is often pictured holding the strand of the universe which intersects the *mandorla* of her womb,<sup>15</sup> early accounts of Aphrodite link her as Clotho with the three spinning fates, and (like her counterparts in Pima, Zuni and Mayan myth) assign her the task of weaving rainclouds

from the skein of the moon. Here the grounds of metaphor were the similarity of thread of life to umbilical cord, whirling movement of the spindle to the perpetual "word in progress" of the vital *pneuma* flowing over the surface of all life, and of course the proximate resemblance of the spindle shape to the vulva: "Problems ye first, construct ann aquilittoral dryankle Probe loom!" (*FW* 286: 20). In the *Timaeus* (36b-39b) and especially in the myth of Er the Armenian in the *Republic* (X: 616:617b) Plato imagined that the axis or naval of the cosmos was huge diamond-shaped spindle of necessity that measured and regulated the dance of the planets. In some instances, the whirling spindle is styled as a conical seed pod of the lotus (seen as triangular from the side and circular from the top). The form evolved from the Mesopotamian lunar cone emblematic of the sanctity of a city's walls, or as a spiral ("gyrotundo" *FW* 295: 24), embodying both the generative power of Nature and the texture of her handiwork. She is even portrayed with a serpentine double helix encircling her spinal column and issuing from the dome of her head as locks of Medusa.<sup>16</sup>

At the necessary risk of oversimplification, perspective requires that the examples above, drawn mainly from the Eastern Mediterranean and Fertile Crescent, be illumined by the Indó-Aryan and Sanskrit marginalia scattered through the balance of 11: 2: "Asia in Ireland." Shortly after the presentation of the geometric diagram, Joyce's pedantic "Sarga, or the path of outgoing" appears in the left-hand margin as shorthand for a fundamental, complementary process of the cosmos. On the one hand, it denotes creation of the *prima materia* seen only in Maya's web of illusion; on the other, it is the voiding in the moment of Shiva's cataclysmic dance or, in the microcosm, the breathless less hush following the utterance of the cosmic syllable OM. Often transcribed as AUM (as in "Salam, salms, salaum," *FW* 360: 27), the three elements of the diphthong (surrounded by silence as the fourth component) correspond to the stages of waking and dream and thus may be likened to three Vichian stages of mythical history, along with *ricorso*. OM is the germ seed of speech and manifestation of the Logos. It embodies the indestructible essence of the triple Vedas and is symbolically present in the *mandorla* shaped enclosure of the hands in prayerful attitude, which is also a symbol of Maya. Hence, OM shares the same symbol as the woven texture of the world's appearance, and in Devanagari transcription is seen in the outline of Shiva's dance spelling the closure of the cosmic circle of time. The syllable echoes in the pages following the diagram – "something ... figuratively the home of your eternal geomater ... the logos of someone ... her undecribables ... my omination" – and informs our understanding of the diagram's permutations in a way that is not apparent from the conventions of Western readings.

René Guénon discusses a late fifteenth-century transcendental symbol of the Order of Carmelites ( ) which has some startling implications for the philosophy of symbolic forms and, thus, for Joycean geometry. Guénon reminds us that the Carmelites entered Western horizons through their affiliation with the Order of Elijah and with Pythagorean and Solomonic learning. The symbol Guénon continues, is an abbreviation for Ave Maria and, at its roots, of the Logos – alpha and omega. Most interesting is his demonstration that the geometric configuration is also a rebus for AUM, and in its various

formal inflections is seen in conjunction with the superimposition of twin circles which forms the Star of Solomon: a line through the horizontal median marks the reflection of the upper eight lines in the lower eight.<sup>17</sup> One of the most durable symbols of Thomism and medieval hermeticism in general was the six-pointed Seal of Solomon (symbol of Christ) of which the joined triangles were taken to represent the *hierogamos* of Spirit and matter and the reflection of the creative breath (*ruach Adonai*) on the oceanic chaos of Genesis 1: 2: "Salmonson set his seel on a hexengown ... distinct and isoplural in its (your sow to the double) sixuous parts, flument, fluvey and fluteous" (*FW* 297: 3, 21-22). Without doubt, separation of the "waters from the waters" of Genesis 1: 6 originated from Mesopotamian cosmological texts, as did the "earth-diver" motif in the creation of Adam from mud (Genesis 2: 7). Thus, the creation re-enactment of "Anny litle mud which cometh out of Man" may indeed conjure up Matthew 15: 11<sup>18</sup> but, through Joyce's brilliant refraction of Biblical texts, it also points to the Hebrew *māim*, the waters which in Genesis 1:6 take the grammatical form of the dual, allowing for the idea of "double chaos" of form and formlessness as shared potentiality.

The divine reflection on and inflection of the water directly informs not only Joyce's emendation of Euclid but also the marginal Sanskrit notation following "Sarga" on page 294: "Maya-Thaya. Tamas-Rajas-Sattvas." The initial pair of terms deals with the infusion of cosmic appearance into *prima materia* (Thaya/Thea), while the triad of *gunas* can be abruptly summarized as inertia, activity, resolution – roughly comparable to Plato's desire, emotion, and intelligence, and to the roles assigned by tradition to the three Graces. In Hindu creation myths (as in the *Book of the Dead*), the incarnation of spirit (*purusha*) in matter (*prakriti*) weds immutability with becoming, which share the same noun in Sanskrit (*bhū*; cf. *FW* 394: 31-35.) Illusion of identity is merely the appearance of maya, just as solar and lunar illumination, when viewed at the opposite poles of the horizon during a moonrise, appear equal in size and intensity: "As the image of the sun reflected in water quivers and fluctuates in accordance with the undulations of the water" (*Brahma-Sutras* 2: 3, 46-53). Like Joyce's Euclidean relativity, the water represents the potential sum of all formal possibilities emanating in conical rays from the single source of illumination, as in the *Rig Veda*.<sup>19</sup> In primitive mythologies, the sun at moonrise shoots its solar shaft, wounding and causing the moon to wane and disappear for three days – like Christ in the tomb, before rising at Easter when the superposed waning and waxing lunar crescents form the inner space of the *mandorla*. So it is that the Euclidean drawing is surrounded by verbal and symbolic figurations (e.g., *FW* 292: 11-12; 298: 1, 13) of opposed or attracted vertices which in mythological systems articulate imminent reversal of the established order and symbolize the World Mountain (alp pla), in combination with the divine twins in their subterranean cavern-city or of the expanding branches and roots of the World Tree. The progressive transformation of the *gunas* in schematized in triangular form, as the three theological virtues are framed in the gothic *mandorla*.

The hourglass drum of Shiva sounds the pulsebeat which draws the veil of temporality across the face of the eternal void: this conventional symbol is sanctioned by

the inverted cones of the World Tree in *Rig Veda* 3: 7. 1-3 (cf. *FW* 80: 23). Symbols merge into language as the geometrical symbols form the Pythagorean quincunx, corner stone of the material world and promise of quintessential transcendence: "Quaint a quincidence".<sup>20</sup> In Mesopotamian myth the quincunx represented the five "void" days of *ricorso* following the 360-day year and the tip of the pyramidal ziggurat to which the four directional sides rise, site of the sacred marriage of heaven and earth. Sumerian astronomers attempted to solve the enigma of the "navel of the goddess," i.e., the mystery of the 360-degree revolution of the zodiac around Polaris and the derivation through mathematics of multiplicity from unity. Their discovery that the equinoxes process as the approximate rate of 52 seconds per year ultimately led to the cipher 432 (St. Patrick's arrival in Eire, etc.) as the key to beginning and completion of cosmic rounds. Their other revelation was the key number 3.1416. The connection is clear, in the figuration of the mother, with Shem/Dolph's assignment of Pi to the navel and P to the fruitful womb.

Illumination (*sattvas*) as the ultimate goal of the three qualities of personality is implicitly carried into the marginal notation (page 303) on the seven "force centers" of yoga, which continues the foliation of triangles from the universal matrix. The serpent represents the rise of spiritual heat, along and around the spinal column from the genital seeds and "Holy Bone" (*sacral*) at the base to the "intertemporal eye." The first station at the heart is represented in conventional symbolism by a lotus containing a double triangle, identical with the Seal of Solomon, within which is a stylized form of a *yon*i housing a shining *lingam*: here we are in perfect balance, as opposed to the fighting words in the text ("Upanishadem ... Eregobragh") and brother battle (*FW* 303: 13-15; cf. 404: 18). Illumination is reserved for the intertemporal eye of Shiva, which sees beyond limitations of water and fire, "solar past" and "lunar future."<sup>21</sup> Seeing beyond space/time constraints, the eye reduces all maya appearance to ashes from which it is reborn Phoenix-like in greater illumination. Thus, it abides in an eternal present as the epitome of all time; and as a mere geometrical point without dimension in the spatial order, it bears the potential for all extension through space.

By far the most pertinent configuration of Shiva's insight in Hindu symbology, for comparison with Joyce's Euclid, is the endlessly reborn, triangular exfoliation from the cosmic lotus known as Shri Yantra (cf. *FW* 80: 24-25; 292: 11-12). The geometric pattern shows a square with a portal on each directional side, drawn with triple serrated lines marking the figure's dimensional orientation in space. Inside the square is an eight-petaled lotus, such as the heart *chakra* of the "Force Centres of the Fire Serpentine," signifying regeneration. The lotus is actually part of a triple aureole, signifying the "subtle" world that is intermediate in a three-part cosmos between matter and spirit. And inside the lotus circle are five triangles with apexes pointed down, interwoven with four triangles with apexes upward; the upward triangles (*vahni*) symbolize the renewable life-potential that is epitomized in semen ("the seim anew"), whereas the four triangles (*shakti*) symbolize the eternal feminine, for Shakti is the consort of the transcendental Shiva.<sup>22</sup> The overlayed triangles create the optical illusion of progressive expansion from or graduated reduction to an imaginary point (*bindu*) in the

smallest, central triangle. This is the metaphysical point from which primordial energy radiates, and so its presence is in the eye of the enlightened beholder. At the heart of the squared circle, then we find the formlessness that is symbolic of the cosmic void.

Like the well known Shri Yantra, examples of the interwoven square/cube (hemi-) sphere, and trigon could be reproduced geometrically, as by mitosis, without furthering principal arguments. Since a spate of texts and icons could be cited from mythologies that not even Joyce could have known, critical discourse would risk degenerating into open-ended speculation on basic forms of fermented language. Inadvertently, the reproduction (or "foliation") of kindred images that undergird disparate beliefs would paraphrase in scholar's language the proliferation of mythology in its more natural habitat. The necessary wager, however, is this: aided by an encyclopaedia of comparable forms and investments of meaning, in both stylized miniaturization and elaborated cosmic projection, the microscopy of deconstruction may enhance our understanding of the sustained expansion and reduction of mythic language in the *Wake*. Critical commentary saturated with scholarly apparatus might be necessary in the supersaturated depths of "Triv and Quad" in order to reconstruct a modest fraction of any of the chapter's "grids." It should be evident that in marshalling appropriate texts for comparison, the limiting yet labyrinthine paradigm of Graeco-Roman mythology should be diminished, although it is frequently the main reference point of Western readers. Meticulously peeling through the layers of Joyce's text to archaic and forgotten strata in the language of myth will illumine forms that have survived the life and death cycles of mythological systems, since theirs is the obscure and inexhaustible source of energy and illumination for the mind's eye.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Exegeses of the diagram's link with Yeats's "A Vision" or with the sigla of the Doodles family inscribed in its entirety can easily be found in the literature. The scattershot analogies of Roland Mc Hugh are probably the most incisive (*The Sigla of "Finnegans Wake"* [Arnold: London, 1976], pp. 67-76).

<sup>2</sup>Literally "awe-almondlike," according to I.E. etymology.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Stephen's fantasy of navel cords linking humanity with the original mother, in *Ulysses* (Random House: New York, 1961), p. 38. From the etymology of her name Penelope is veiled by the yarn she spins, materially evident in matronymic attribute (*pene* = "spindle"). The first "Oxen of the Sun" Notesheet shows a progression of concentric almond shapes exfoliating from a single point; cf. the inter-sectional *mandorla* and similar progression from the mouth of the sun (*ruach Elohim*) in the General Plan of Cabalistic Doctrine, cited in Eliphas Levi's *History of Magic* (Weiser: New York, 1973), p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis expositio*, 11.2. Cf. *FW* 293: 7-8.

<sup>5</sup>Rene Guenon discusses exchange of vegetal for mineral, circle for square in Heavenly Jerusalem (*L'Esoterisme de Dante* [Gallimard: Paris, 1957], p. 67).

<sup>6</sup>See R.W. Rogers, *The Religion of Bablyonia and Assyria* (Eaton and Mains: New York, 1908), p. 164. Scholars have attempted to unite these two cults into one hypothetical ur-cult. The eye of Horus atop the pyramid on the verso of the American dollar bill surmounts a Latin legend ("A new order of time begins well"). Revolutionary golden ages (e.g., the Krita Yuga) begin thus.

<sup>7</sup>*Exhortation to the Greeks* (19) in *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, (Catholic University of America Press: Washington, 1948), p. 396.



\*"Indiana Blues" of p. 285 refers to the *mandorla*-shaped double arc of the chapter's various rainbows; at the same time, the etymology of this indigo stems from Sanskrit *nīla* – also the word for the blossom of the almond tree.

<sup>9</sup>Frazer attributes the legend to the Phrygian cosmogony in which the almond stands as the image of the All-Father and "springs from the genitals of a man-monster," *The Golden Bough* (McMillan: New York, 1951), 5: 263-269.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *FW* 139: 12 and the closing scene where St. Kevin rises from the lake of night to mark the dawn of Christianity in Eire: "Jakob van der Bethel... with Essay of Messagepostumia" (607: 8-9). See also Grace Eckley, *Children's Lore in Finnegans Wake* (Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1985), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup>*Bethlehem*: "House of Bread"; cf. the Devil's command that Christ turn stones to bread as proof of his divinity (Matt. 4: 3) and Christ as the manna from heaven admonishing that "man does not live by bread alone but by each word that comes from God's mouth." See Joseph Campbell on the "house of food" and *Anna-maya-kosha* ("appearance-in the aspect-of food") in *Skeleton Key to "Finnegans Wake"* (Penguin: New York, 1980), p. 166; *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (Br. 2) where the fiery creator hovers over the surface of primeval waters, and creative speech and knowledge are "food" for thought; and *FW* 300: 23.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Buck Mulligan's parodistic "What's bred in the bone cannot fail me to fly," *Ulysses*, p. 19. Leibnitz's atomistic reduction after death of perpetually living matter comes to mind, and, as always, Blake of the *Four zoas* and Milton: "The nature of a Female Space is thus: it shrinks the Organs / Of Life till they become Finite and Itself seems Infinite" (*Milton* 1. 10. 6-7). Cf. *FW*: 57: 1-7 and 298: 8-9: "her littlenist to no magnetude."

<sup>13</sup>*The Great Mother* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1974), plates 6, 55. Cf. the Paleolithic *mandorlas* from North America and the twin diamonds enclosed in the trunk of an *axis mundi* (ca. 200 B.C.) cited by Joseph Campbell in *The Way of Zen* (Harper & Row: San Francisco, 1983), pp. 76, 213. Robert Gessain cites similar figurations from clinical dreamwork involving patients suffering from severe castration anxiety or neurotic obsession with the threatening appearance of the mother's genitals ("Vagina dentata dans la clinique et la mythologie," *Psychanalyse* 3 [1957], 258). Indeed, dreamwork has been invoked for insight into the *Wake*'s oneiric scenes and language. Insofar as intersecting circles may be read as a prism affording refracted views of Dublin, like a philosopher's stone capable of enhancing our vision beyond appearances, consider Jung's *rapprochement* of a Roman temple floor near Carthage and the drawing of a patient suffering from an inordinate maternal impact on his life. Both show an almond-shaped eye with serpents "rampant" at the corners. The emendation of Jung's patient is to draw in a water line so that one orbital arc is submerged and at the same time reflected in the other (*Collected Works*) [Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1959], vol. 9, figs. 43, 44). Equation of eye and genital is familiar to myth both Western (the temporary "blindness" of Achilles with Patroclus; the condign punishment of Oedipus) and Eastern (Amaterasu born from the almond eye of her solar father).

<sup>14</sup>See Hippolytus, *Philosophumena: Refutation of All Heresies* (Translations of Christian Literature: London, 1921), 1: 140-42. Aimd the whisperings of tree and stone, the story of HCE is rehearsed from A to O, complete with "A pair of sycopanties with amygdaline eyes ... And that was how framm Sin to Son, acity rose" (94: 16-19; cf. 183: 12 and 296: 3; John 1: 1-3; Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* [Vintage Books: New York, 1964], p. 72).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. the juxtaposition of spindle and fish housed in the middle of a *mandorla*, in J.B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1954), p. 144.

<sup>16</sup>The last sentence draws substantially on Elmer Suhr, *The Spinning Aphrodite* (Helios: New York, 1969), pp. 34, 66, 140, 160. Cf. *FW* 292: 20-21.

<sup>17</sup>*Le Roi du monde* (Editions traditionnelles: Paris, 1950), pp. 19, 33-35.

<sup>18</sup>Ronald Mc Hugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1980), p. 287. See the crosshatching of Last Supper and "pigeon's pneu" [breath of the Holy Spirit] "on the face of the waters" (*FW* 458: 16, 21. The "broad and hairy face" in the margin at the beginning of 11: 2 is sometimes shown as Macroprosopos at the apex of an upright triangle, whose darkened reflection on the waters appears as Microprosopos at the apex of an inverted triangle; the legs of the triangle symbolize the door pillars of Somomon's temple and hence the polarities of active/passive, Cain/Abel, right/duty (*FW* 260, 287: 11). In such configurations of cabalistic symbolism, the head of the Zohar is often shown inside a triangle, with the Star of Solomon between the two eyes; the almond shape circumscribing star and eyes is that of the brazen vessel of the *Lemegeton* (or

"Little Key of Solomon").

<sup>19</sup>See Luc Benoist, *Art du monde* (Gallimard: Paris, 1941), p. 56.

<sup>20</sup>*FIW* 299: 8; cf. 206: 35 where it follows a reference to Casey's Euclid and precedes an allusion to the inter-lock of eons.

<sup>21</sup>Wendy O'Flaherty has shown the obvious relationship in Shiva myth between the intertemporal eye and organs of generation (*Aesceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Shiva* [Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1973], pp. 247-250). Aramaic tradition relates *luz* to the *os coccyx*, the "nut" of the spinal column; see *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (Funk and Wagnalls: New York and London, 1944), 8: 219. Cf. the mythic burial of the two ends of Osiris's spine.

<sup>22</sup>Greek lexicography assign the delta as the symbol for the female.

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# Multiple Personality Disorder, Literature and the Politics of Memory

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## Introduction

The focal point of this paper is personal identity and the role memory might play in the construction and understanding of that identity. At least since Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690) in the late 17th C. many have believed that our identities are intimately entwined and indeed constituted by our memories. In some recent work by Ian Hacking, particularly in *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (1995), this issue is taken up in a new form in the context of an examination of Multiple Personality Disorder and the advent of the sciences of memory in the nineteenth century. Intricately related to Hacking's position is a thesis he calls "the indeterminacy of the past" which asserts that there is no definitive truth about the past because the past is, in ways we will detail below, inherently indeterminate. We reject this position. In short, by using both theoretical arguments and examples taken from a fictional narrative — Paul Auster's recent *Leviathan* (1992) — we argue that while indeterminacy may at times be unavoidable in the complex matrices which constitute our lives, indeterminacy can at other times be overcome. This can be accomplished, however, only by accessing and evaluating information from a variety of temporal perspectives and, most importantly, by referring to information *external* to oneself. Hacking fails to see this because he focuses too heavily upon (personal) memory and as such privileges the present over the past as well as a first person perspective. If we see people's lives synoptically as a 'doing in context' of their relationships with others, then we have evidence for some sort of truth not only of the past but of people's lives generally.

## I

Paul Auster's novel *Leviathan* presents us with a mystery. In the beginning, Peter Aaron, the novel's narrator, has come upon a brief newspaper story which describes an incident of a man who has, perhaps accidentally, blown himself up along the side of a road in Northern Wisconsin. Evidence regarding the man's identity is sketchy; there is a dearth of clues. The body was literally blown to bits, spread out over an area of fifty feet; fingerprints have been decimated; whatever pieces of ID that have been found turn out to be forged, the car stolen (Auster, 1992, 1-2). 'Deeper' evidence — such as dental records, and the tracking of the man's prior movements — must be uncovered and this is a time consuming, difficult task.

Aaron, however, is certain immediately that he has solved the puzzle: "Almost inevitably, I began to think of Benjamin Sachs [his best friend]. There was nothing in the

article that pointed to him in any definite way, and yet at the same time everything seemed to fit" (Auster, 1992, 3). That is Aaron has, or thinks he has been able, to read the gaps in the evidence presented. Having constructed a hypothesis, he commits himself to unveiling the evidence which will corroborate it. Interestingly, he decides to do this by writing the story of Ben Sachs's life, to tell "the truth" about his life because "once the secret" of Sachs's identity is out, "all sorts of lies are going to be told, ugly distortions will circulate in the newspapers and magazines, and within a matter of days a man's reputation will be destroyed" (Auster, 1992, 2).

The FBI, having found a slip of paper in the exploded man's wallet which contains Aaron's initials and telephone number, tracks Aaron down a few days later. Confirming his suspicion that he is right, Aaron is also lead to form a conjecture on the relation between narratives and identity. Not only will he be constructing a person through narrative so too will the police: "In other words, the whole time I'm here in Vermont writing this story, they'll be busy writing their own story. It will be my story, and once they've finished it, they'll know as much about me as I do myself" (Auster, 1992, 8). This suggests a complex relationship between narrative, self and other. In writing about Sachs, it is also his own identity that Aaron is trying to uncover and protect, an identity that is inseparable from his friend's and is in some way threatened by the police's narrative. Thus, one's identity it seems is the result of stories told about oneself — stories which, as we will see, are essentially based on memory, on reclaiming the past events of one's life.

## II

In *Rewriting the Soul* (1995), Ian Hacking recounts the history of the transformation of memory from an ability to recall facts into a repository of knowledge about an individual's past. He centers his attention upon the therapeutic and historical construction of a particular psychiatric ailment: Multiple Personality Disorder. But MPD is, according to him, only one illustration among others of a more general phenomenon: the invention of the sciences of memory.<sup>1</sup> At some point in the second half of the nineteenth century, Hacking argues, memory became an object of scientific investigation in the sense that it came to be seen as containing facts, truths or falsehoods about an individual's past which could be discovered and used to understand that person's present. New and old disciplines, such as psychiatry, "scientific hypnotism" and psychoanalysis, were mobilized to discover and to interpret these facts. The idea of an intimate relationship between memory and identity is itself of course much more ancient since it dates at least from John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690). What the second half of the nineteenth century invented were the "sciences of memory", the belief that there is knowledge to be gained through the systematic exploration of memory. This entails, or at least suggests, that there are hidden memories, forgotten events which are not simply lost but which are, in some way, still there; bits of knowledge normally irretrievable by a person, but which can be discovered by a scientific investigation, analysis or therapy. Also, as Hacking notes, it came to be thought "that what has been forgotten is what forms our character, our personality, our soul" (Hacking, 1995, 209).

Although this is an idea which, he says, is "dazzling in its implausibility," (209) he accepts that it is an idea which is inseparable from the sciences of memory. In many ways, multiple personality disorder as an object of inquiry fits that bill perfectly, as we will now see.

There are no necessary or sufficient conditions postulated for multiple personality disorder, nor has psychiatry found, unlike some forms of schizophrenia, for example, any physiological causes for the ailment. Rather, MPD has been defined by grouping prototypical symptoms. One, of course, is the presence of two or more distinct personalities, each of which is dominant at particular times. Other typical symptoms include the claim that the behaviour of the individual is determined by whatever personality or 'alter' (as it is called) is dominant and that the transition from one alter to another is typically sudden with the separate alters often having no knowledge of each other. Psychological stress is said to be the cause of switching from one alter to another, and alters can range over gender, age, and race. Memory too, or rather its absence, is essential as fugues are typical when alters experience lost periods of time as another alter is dominant. Finally, the etiology of multiple personality is child abuse, particularly of an acute and repeated variety and almost always sexual in some manner (See APA, *DSM-III*, 1980). Multiple personality is said to be a way in which the "self" is protected by "dissociating" from the experience (Hacking, 1994, 443-446). Clearly, then, whatever else the disorder may (or may not) turn out to be, it is about personal identity: multiple personality constitutes a way for a person to be.

At the heart of MPD psychiatrists and therapists find memories of child abuse which are generally repressed and almost always involve parents, close relatives, or care givers whom the child trusted. Therapy requires discovering these memories and slowly bringing the patient to cope with them and integrate them in a unique self. If that is not always what therapists do, since some, according to Hacking, irresponsibly tend to encourage the multiplication and permanence of alters, it is at least what he believes they should do. In the last chapter of his book Hacking puts forward strong deontological reasons why patients should be brought to deal with these repressed memories and argues that many multiple personality therapies constitute a form of false consciousness. What Hacking reproaches to these therapies is not that the memories retrieved may be false - "they may be true enough" says he - but that they tend to perpetuate the male stereotype of the "passive woman who could not hang in, who retroactively creates a story about herself in which she was the weak vessel." (266) Hacking's guiding principle here is the moral ideal of autonomy and what, according to him, distinguishes good from bad therapy is not whether it reveals or hides the truth about the patients past, but whether it allows her (or him) to take charge of her (his) own life.

In fact, Hacking is somewhat skeptical about the ability of the "sciences of memory" to discover the truth about the past.<sup>2</sup> This is not because of the, according to him, trivial reason that many of the memories discovered by these "sciences" may be false, imaginary, self-serving or fictional, but because of what he defines as a "deep philosophical reason": the indeterminacy of the past. Though the name is somewhat formidable, the idea is not that difficult. Every human action, he reminds us following Anscombe (1959), is that action

under a description. Under a different description, the same event may constitute a different action. Consider a simple example, the turning on of a light switch. This simple physical event could be many different things: finding one's way to the fridge for food, signaling one's lover from across the street that the 'coast is clear', or an attempt to scare off suspected burglars. This pushing up an electrical switch, then, may be seen as one, two, or three actions depending upon the way in which the physical event is described. Consequently, according to Hacking, because past actions are open to future re-descriptions, they are to some extent indeterminate. When a person comes to reflect upon her past, if new meanings and modes of description hitherto unknown to her are now made available, the same events may gain new meanings. But, Hacking argues, we should not consider that it is only her memories or her interpretations of the past that have changed: *the past itself has changed along with the actions which constituted it*. Because every action is always action under a description, "retrospective re-descriptions" can change the past. Thus there is little chance that the sciences of memory will ever discover the past as it truly was simply because there is no such thing as a determinate past. That is why truth is not the yardstick with which to judge the findings of "memoro-politics". Autonomy, Hacking argues, constitutes a better criterion.

Be that as it may, the metaphysical doctrine on which this moral conclusion rests is nonetheless somewhat puzzling. Hacking is careful to point out that the intention appearing in an intentional description defining this or that action should not be construed as "an entity in the mind" (235). Rather, it should be seen as "the doing in context." (248) Given that acting is acting under a description, it seems a simple logical conclusion that "[i]f a description did not exist, or was not available, at an earlier time, then at that time one could not act intentionally under that description." Hacking adds "[o]nly later did it become true that, at that time, one performed an action under that description." (243) But why should we say that it became true "at that time?" Why should the future description in this case have precedence over the past? Is it not better to say simply that an agent performed one action yesterday which today can be seen as another action? And does time have anything to do with it? Imagine the following variation on Anscombe's famous example<sup>3</sup>. I am pumping water into a reservoir which supplies fresh drinking water to a house. Unbeknownst to me, I am poisoning my parents who live in that house. Because that description of my action is unavailable to me at the time of the action, Hacking is right in thinking that at that time I cannot say that I acted intentionally under that description. But does it follow that it cannot be said? Especially if the intention is not something which is in the mind of the agent, but the "doing in context". Suppose that at that same time this description of my action is available to (and actually used by) my brother Ian who poisoned the well and paid me for my work to better hide his crime. Should we say that neither description of my action is "definitely correct nor definitely incorrect" and that what I did is to a "certain extent indeterminate" (243)? Well, maybe on certain occasions it is appropriate to say that, but if we can and when we can, whatever indeterminacy there is has very little to do with time. What it has to do with is knowledge. To say that the intention is not something in the mind

of the agent is a writ against the first person's point of view. The indeterminacy corresponds to our uncertainty. Was I really unaware that the well was poisoned or was I to some extent a willing accomplice to the crime? If there is no answer to these questions, if there is no fact of the matter, then what I did is indeterminate.

Some may want to argue that this has to do with power. Maybe Ian wants to convince me that I did it, that I pumped the water, that it is my fault if our parents died, that I am as guilty as him. Maybe, but if such is the case, it only seems right to say that to believe him would constitute a form of false consciousness, a failure of autonomy, a sign of my incapacity to come to terms with the part I played in my own history, if I truly did not poison them intentionally. The political or moral judgement does not presuppose the indeterminacy of what I did. To the contrary, it rests on the determinacy of my action. It presupposes knowledge. For what if Ian's accusation were true? What if I did know that the well was poisoned? Should I still proclaim my innocence? Or is it irrelevant which action I performed?

Hacking's indeterminacy of the past is a puzzling doctrine in that it presupposes a strange advantage of the present over the past. According to him it is "retrospective redescriptions" which make the past indeterminate. But if our past actions are indeterminate because every action is an action under a description then that same indetermination clearly applies to our present actions. Our present descriptions are subject to similar uncertainties. There is a symmetry between the present and the past concerning determinacy which in both cases reflects the limits of our knowledge. What prevents Hacking from seeing this rather obvious point is, we believe, his excessive reliance on the value of memory. This may seem surprising. The sciences of memory aimed at using memory to discover the truth about one's past. Is not the idea of the indeterminacy of the past the deconstruction of that myth? To some extent it is, but notice how limited and incomplete this deconstruction is. According to Hacking, there is no absolute truth about a person's past that those sciences could discover: nonetheless he still believes that "memoria politics", the politics of memory, what is left of the sciences of memory once their epistemic value has been removed, yield a form of "knowledge" which can be useful in some way. That judgment has an essentially moral basis. Therapies which rest on the "retrospective redescription" of an indeterminate past are justified if they favor the agent's autonomy and allow her to live a fuller, more responsible life. But why on average favor later descriptions of person's actions over earlier ones? Because Hacking retains the idea that identity is forged through memory. Though memory is unlikely to yield truth, its productions, according to him, are nonetheless indispensable for the construction of our identity.

The thesis of the indeterminacy of the past conflates the idea that the sciences of memory cannot discover the truth about a person's past with the idea that there is no truth to be discovered. That is a bizarre confusion. Surely the failure of the sciences of memory cannot be equated with the impossibility of true knowledge concerning an individual's past; or rather, it can only be if one believes that memory gives her the only or her best access to her past. That is to say, it is only if one accepts that there is a first person's privilege that the failure of the sciences of memory can be seen as the impossibility of true knowledge

concerning a person's past. Further, the indeterminate character of actions, past or present, does not preclude the existence of truth about those actions. Resorting once again to the fictional example of my evil brother Ian, maybe it is indeterminate whether or not I poisoned my parents. It may be that I even don't know myself, but that indeterminacy does not have anything to do with the past.

### III

Auster's *Leviathan* concerns itself with issues such as these. As Aaron expresses it mid-way through the novel: "Can a man fall asleep as one person and then wake up as another?... [I]f that's true, it would mean that human behavior makes no sense. It would mean that nothing can ever be understood about anything" (Auster, 1992. 118-119). Aaron has to this point failed in his attempt to ascertain any unity or reason to Sach's life because that life appears to be radically bifurcated and dissociated from a peaceful and successful writer with a stable family life at the beginning of the novel to a violent terrorist who travels the country under assumed names and false identities blowing up scale model replicas of the Statue of Liberty at the end. Our interest in this novel concerns the way(s) in which Aaron seeks to construct the existence of his friend Sachs through personal memory. In particular, we are interested in contrasting this approach with the (or a) reader's point of view regarding Sach's character in order to demonstrate that just because Aaron fails in *his* attempt to determine the truth about Sachs does not mean that everyone else will fail. That is, the fact that personal memory fails to be a reliable guide to the past does not, we shall argue, mean that there is no determinate truth about the past at all.

At mid-point through *Leviathan* Peter Aaron gives us a criterion of what constitutes, according to him, a good interpretation or correct understanding of Benjamin Sachs's existence. It is a requirement, it seems, for unity and identity. As we have said, Sach's life is apparently split in two which we as readers begin to see only after a particular event, a near death from falling off an apartment balcony. Although we never know for certain whether his falling was an accident or an attempted suicide, we do know that Sachs, who was a writer, novelist and essayist but who, lately, is having difficulty writing, now abandons his wife and disappears. A short time later he kills a man whom he then sets out, so to say, to replace. Sachs impersonates his victim, but not by adopting his legal identity, Reed Dimmagio. Rather, he goes to his victim's house and insidiously, progressively succeeds in becoming a father to the child and a husband to the wife of the man he has killed (and perhaps murdered). Sachs pushes the imitation of Dimmagio even farther. Rapidly dissatisfied with his new life as a family man, he retires to Dimmagio's office, an encumbered den where he discovers, reads and ponders over his victim's Ph.D. dissertation on the life of an early twentieth century anarchist. This constitutes a revelation for Sachs. He embraces Dimmagio's ideal of violent social criticism and, just as his victim had done before him, he abandons his wife and child and sets out on a crusade of terrorist attacks which ends with his violent death.

How are we to make sense of this bifurcated existence? How are we to explain the transformation of the peaceful writer into the violent terrorist? Is the public figure of the



first half of the novel, the respected author who signs articles in well-known journals, the same person as the underground social activist of no known address, who travels in stolen vehicles carrying false papers? They are the same individual, but are they the same person? How does one become the other? Where is the unity of this strange, dissociated life? What is Ben Sachs's identity?

Peter Aaron believes that there are answers to these questions and expects that only some answers will make sense and will provide an understanding of Sach's torn and dramatic existence. He searches his memory in an attempt to discover in Sach's life and in their past relationship an answer which will end his doubts and ease the pain he feels for his friend. Aaron strives to be truthful and candid about his past relationship with Benjamin Sachs and he reports Sach's words as faithfully as he can when dealing with those aspects of the story which he learned only through him. His memory is probably not to be faulted. Yet the answer he comes up with is neither very convincing nor very clear. The only explicit solution contained in the novel concerning the unity of Sach's life is Sachs's own explanation of his behaviour towards the end of the book. Before broaching that topic, however, we want to concentrate our attention on the relationship between Sachs and Aaron. In explaining that relationship, and others which flow out of it — in particular an affair between Aaron and Sach's wife, Fanny — we hope to demonstrate why Aaron fails in his attempts to construct a unified Sachs. Aaron, we argue, simply misunderstands his relationship with Sachs: as a result, he cannot successfully write Sachs narrative history because his memories of Sach's life are based upon false beliefs.

#### IV

Aaron and Sachs first met in an empty bar room where a scheduled public reading had been canceled because of bad weather. In spite of its somewhat accidental character, this meeting was not entirely fortuitous. As Sachs tells Aaron, it was Sachs who, after having read some of the latter's work, recommended Aaron to the organizers. During that first encounter, which lasted one afternoon and involved a large quantity of bourbon, Sachs generously compliments Aaron on his writing. The next day Aaron literally devours Sachs's novel and writes him a letter which conveys his admiration for the book and its author. The two rapidly become inseparable friends. Aaron is at first clearly infatuated with Sachs, seeing him as a model of what he would like to become. He notes, for example, that while he himself is a 'plodder' when writing, Sachs is capable of a "productivity [which] awed him.... The smallest word is surrounded by acres of silence for me, and even after I manage to get a word down on the page, it seems to sit there like a mirage, a speck of doubt glimmering in the sand... Sachs never had any of these difficulties. Words and things matched up for him, whereas for me they are constantly breaking apart, flying off in a hundred different directions" (Auster, 1992, 55). Sachs was a more successful author; indeed, "some publications paid large sums of money for his articles" (Auster, 1992, 54). And being well connected as a result of his success, Sachs generously introduced his friend to his many acquaintances. As Aaron tells us, Sachs and his wife Fanny "knew an astounding number of

people, and at some time or another it seemed that half of New York wound up sitting at the large oval table in their dining room" (Auster, 1992, 64). During that time Aaron was poor. He was an unknown author doing translations to make ends meet. His first son was born, but his marriage fell apart.

Shortly after he broke up with his first wife, Delia, Aaron's luck changed, and so did his relationship with Sachs and his wife. Through them he first met Maria Turner, who became his lover and was later to play an important role in Sachs's life. Then money started coming in. Around that same period Sachs went to Hollywood to work on the script of a movie based on his novel, *The New Colossus*. During his absence from New York, Fanny seduced Aaron, or that at least is the way Aaron presents the incident. There are reasons nonetheless to suspect that the events might not have been quite that simple. When Sachs first introduced his wife to Aaron, they immediately recognized each other. Not that Fanny was someone Aaron had known particularly well. In fact, he had seen her in his neighborhood a few times when he was a student at the university and they happened to be enrolled in the same philosophy course, but he had never spoken with her and says that "There was something intimidating about her elegance, a walled-off quality that seemed to discourage strangers approaching her. The wedding ring on her left hand was partly responsible. I suppose, but even if she hadn't been married, I'm not sure it would have made any difference" (Auster, 1992, 48). This first relationship blossomed into nothing more than the occasional exchanged smile and Aaron making conscious efforts to sit behind her in their joint class. Hardly the stuff of torrid romance. Aaron nonetheless found his chance reencounter with the unknown woman behind whom he used to sit as the wife of his friend "unsettling" (Auster, 1992, 48). "Fanny was an ancient daydream, a phantom of sexual desire buried in my past, and now she had unexpectedly materialized in a new role — as flesh-and-blood woman, *as wife of my friend* — I admit I was thrown off balance" (Auster, 1992, 51 — emphasis added). So off balance in fact, that he immediately thinks of Fanny and Sachs as a "strange match" and speaks of them in comparative terms in which Fanny invariably comes out on top: she's better looking, more intelligent, more articulate, and so on (Auster, 1992, 48, 49). Aaron recognizes his desire for her, but he also recognizes that it is unacceptable. Strangely enough, however, he projects his desire into his past: "As long as I behaved myself, she wouldn't hold my past sins against me" (Auster, 1992, 52). Sitting behind a (then unknown) woman in philosophy class, and occasionally smiling at her is hardly a "sin," however. Clearly, the sin is present, not past: the sin is his current sexual desire for the "wife of my friend."

But Aaron did not succeed in behaving himself forever. One evening during Sachs's absence, Fanny invites Aaron to dinner. In itself this was not atypical except for the fact that Sachs wasn't there: "In all the years we had known each other, Fanny and I had never spent any time by ourselves" (Auster, 1992, 88). Although Aaron begins the evening with thoughts of returning to his wife, he ends by beginning an affair with Fanny. Although it's plain to Fanny (and the reader) that Aaron is in love with her, Aaron can only agree to the affair by externalizing responsibility for the event, first by convincing himself that Fanny was persistent, and second, by his learning, through Fanny, of all the affairs Sachs has had. That

is. by having sex with Fanny, Aaron can be just like Sachs, both in the sense of having affairs and more particularly in the sense of screwing Sachs' wife and thereby taking his place. This desire proved impossible for him to deny: "Ben was still out of town, and ... I slept every night at *his* house, sleeping in *his* bed, and making love to *his* wife" (Auster, 1992 — emphasis added).

Eventually Sachs returned, and though Aaron begged Fanny to leave Sachs and to marry him, it was to no avail. Fanny had never dreamed of leaving her husband. Aaron soon faced the prospect of having to explain his behaviour to his friend. When Sachs and Aaron finally met, however, Sachs's determination to ensure that their friendship continue offers Aaron a very different construction of Fanny's behaviour. It is not his numerous affairs that pushed her into Aaron's arms. She is, Sachs claims, an inveterately jealous woman, and as a result he has had, over time, to "play along" with this; indeed, to actively participate in the deception: "I tell her stories. It's part of the game we play. I make up stories about my imaginary conquests and Fanny listens. It excites her. Words have power, after all. For some women, there's no stronger aphrodisiac" (Auster, 1992, 105). Nor has Fanny always been jealous, but since she has learned that she cannot have any children she is convinced that no man can love her. By loving her, Peter has given her back some confidence: "that's why," Sachs concludes, "I think what happened is a good thing. You've helped her, Peter. You've done more for her than anyone else." (Auster, 1992, 108)

This explanation, in combination with the one provided by Fanny, presents Aaron with two different and mutually exclusive interpretations of events, and as a result, he is uncertain what to believe: "[A]s soon as I accepted one story, I would have to reject the other. There wasn't any alternative. They had presented me with two versions of the truth, two separate and distinct realities, and no amount of pushing and shoving could ever bring them together. I understood that, and yet at the same time I realized that both stories had convinced me" (Auster, 1992, 109). Aaron echoes Hacking's sentiment concerning the past and that of many relativists<sup>5</sup> in his final reflections on these two different accounts provided respectively by Fanny and Sachs: "[I] hesitated to choose between them. I don't think it was a case of divided loyalties, ... but a certainty that both Fanny and Ben had been telling the truth. The truth as they saw it, perhaps, but nevertheless the truth. Neither one of them had been out to deceive me; neither one had intentionally lied. In other words, there was no universal truth. Not for them, not for anyone else" (Auster, 1992, 109). Finally, unable to decide what is *the Truth*, Aaron comes up with an explanation of his own. Fanny "did what she did to prevent me from going back to Delia [his ex-wife] .... If so, then Fanny's actions become nothing less than extraordinary, a pure and luminous gesture of self-sacrifice." And he adds "Of all the interpretations I've considered over the years, this is the one I like best. That doesn't mean it's true, but as long as it could be true, it pleases me to think it is." He concludes with the claim that "After eleven years, it's the only answer that makes any sense" (Auster, 1992, 99). Like Hacking it is for 'moral' reasons that Aaron finally settles for one "retrospective reinterpretation" over another.

It may be true that neither Sachs nor Fanny had been out to deceive Peter, in the sense of wilfully lying to him, but it is hard to escape the feeling that all three characters are deceiving themselves. No matter what may be the explanations for their actions it most probably is not what they pretend. Clearly, Sachs is saying less than the whole truth to his friend (just as he has with his wife), and Aaron is more than willing to accept Sachs's implausible explanation since it relieves both he and his friend of all guilt. Then he presents his adventure with Fanny as the result of her sole initiative and projects his own desire for her into the past. Finally, after having put the whole responsibility for their affair on her shoulders, he transforms her "sin" into a "luminous act of self-sacrifice." These interpretations of the past may be more comforting to Aaron, but they are likely to be false consciousness.

Peter Aaron wants what Benjamin Sachs has: literary success, his facility with language, money, notoriety, and his wife. This 'desire' for what his friend possesses is not "something in the mind," it is his "doing in context." For this reason, it cannot be retrieved directly from memory, though it can be 'seen' by looking both at his memory and at his retrospective re-description of his past. In many ways Aaron and Sachs are rivals, but not in the ordinary sense of an open competition between them. Their rivalry is more hidden and perverse — an unacknowledged rivalry which cannot be confessed by either of them because it goes too much against their friendship, which is real. Aaron does admire Sachs and Sachs needs Aaron's admiration. Their rivalry is inseparable from their mutual admiration. It is another aspect of it. Until now, until Aaron's recent affair with Fanny, Sachs always won this game of competition and success<sup>6</sup>. Slowly things begin to change.

Over the next few years, Aaron's literary success confirms itself and he remarries. Sachs, on the other hand, suffers from a reversal of fortune. The project to make a film out of *The New Colossus* comes to nothing and, due to a change in the political climate, his work becomes less in demand. More and more, in the eyes of many "Sachs came to be seen as a throwback, as someone out of step with the spirit of the time" (Auster, 1992,116). His outward behaviour did not change. "He pretended not to care, but I could see that the battle was wearing him down.... he was gradually losing faith in himself" (Auster, 1992,117). Then came the accident. It occurred at a party thrown on the one hundredth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. Too much alcohol and drugs mixed with too many people trying to see the fireworks from any vantage proved a dangerous concoction as Sachs ended up being (accidentally?) pushed over the balcony railing. Although Sachs could have been killed, since he was on the fourth floor, he survived the fall relatively unscathed physically. And yet, he has been radically altered nonetheless: when he awoke in the hospital he remained for days without talking. He stopped writing, shaved off the beard he had worn since he was young, left his wife and went off to his country house to work on a new novel, even though six years earlier, soon after meeting Aaron, he had decided to abandon fiction forever. Then one day he mysteriously disappeared.

As mentioned previously, the only explicit explanation of any unity in Sachs's life comes from Sachs himself, as related through Aaron. As he sees it, the incident which led him to embark upon a career as a terrorist was the rediscovery by Sachs of his first novel,

*The New Colossus*, on the shelf of a second hand bookstore, when he was already infatuated by Dimmagio's ideal of violent social criticism. On the front cover of that book is a distorted picture of the statue of liberty which suggested to Sachs the target of his attacks: small-scale replicas of the statue that are found in many towns throughout the United States. Through this action, Sachs thought he would carry out his victim's work while simultaneously expressing his own convictions. As he tells Aaron, Sachs saw it as an opportunity,

to make the kind of difference I have never been able to make before.

All of a sudden, my life seemed to make sense to me. Not just the past few months, but my whole life, all the way back to the beginning. It was a miraculous confluence, a startling conjunction of motives and ambitions. I had found the unifying principle, and this one idea would bring all the broken pieces of my life together. For the first time of my life I would be whole (Auster, 1992, 256).

Sachs believes that, for the first time, he will be whole by being both himself and another person, his victim. He forgets that this is something he has already attempted by replacing Dimmagio beside his wife and child and that it failed to bring him peace. Nonetheless, he will pursue the same goal, only this time he will make it more difficult. This time he will become Dimmagio the terrorist, rather than the father and husband (a career that is potentially open to every man). By adopting the underground life and activity of his victim, Sachs hoped that he would "bring all the broken pieces of [his] life together." He also thought that he was aiming at the same objectives of social criticism as when he wrote *The New Colossus*.

Sachs the terrorist, who signs his bombing "the phantom of liberty", is not simply torn between his self and the image of his victim: he permanently invents false identities, new lives and characters for himself. Innumerable roles which, as he informs Aaron, he must act out in order to successfully execute his bombing attacks. During that same conversation, Sachs claimed that there was a strong unity in his life between then and now, i.e., between his early writing and his present bombings. Sachs spoke like a fanatic, Aaron tells us, and he realized later that it was "an admission that he didn't need a life of his own anymore, but he spoke with such happiness, such enthusiasm and lack of doubt, that I scarcely understood the implications of those words at the time" (Auster, 1992, 263). What were these implications? That Sachs expected or intended to die soon, most probably, but perhaps also that in a way he was already dead, that he no longer had any identity, no life of his own anymore. "In fifteen years, Sachs traveled from one end of himself to the other, and by the time he came to that last place, I doubt he even knew who he was anymore. So much distance had been covered by then, it wouldn't have been possible for him to remember where he had begun" (Auster, 1992, 15).

The novel ends with Aaron giving an FBI agent named Harris, who has just informed him he has discovered the identity of the man who "blew himself up by the side of a road in northern Wisconsin" (1), the manuscript of the book we have just read. What led Harris to his discovery was that Sachs had also been impersonating Aaron, going to bookstores where he autographed Aaron's novel as if he were their author. Aaron, we will remember, at the time of the first visit by FBI agents, told them the story of how someone had been

impersonating him, answering letters in his name, walking into bookstores and autographing his books. This was in order to convince the agents that the presence of his telephone number in the pocket of the victim of the Wisconsin explosion did not prove he knew him. Authors, he argued, were often the targets of bizarre and unhealthy attention on the part of readers whom they did not know. He knew he was only buying time. He knew that the dead man was his friend, but he did not know, until Harris told him, that Sachs was his anonymous double just as he was also Reed Dimmagio's double.

There is, then, a strange continuity present in Benjamin Sachs's life, which Harris's revelation suggests. This continuity, paradoxically, destroys rather than constructs Sach's identity. It does not rest on something remembered or forgotten, or even that could be known directly from memory. Rather it is out there to be seen by everyone. That is why Harris found it out. It cannot be told as a story, but a narrative can make it visible, a tale may illustrate it. It is a pattern of behaviour.

As we know, the second 'half' of Benjamin Sach's life is his desperate attempt to become the man he killed by incessantly striving to supplant him as a father, a husband, and terrorist. By trying to be (or become) himself by being (becoming) someone else, he hoped to become whole; to bring together all the pieces of his broken life. But he fails to realize that this division between himself and his model was precisely what broke his life in pieces to begin with. 'This imitation of others' desires forms a constant thread through Benjamin Sachs's life, a pattern of behaviour which is clearly revealed at the end of the novel when we learn that Sachs was also impersonating Aaron by appropriating his life, autographing his books, and signing letters in his name. Benjamin Sachs did not fall off the fire escape as one person and wake up another. His life after his accident exaggerates and caricatures a pattern of behaviour which was already there. He now imitates every aspect of the life of his rivals.

In a series of literary (Girard, 1966; 1978; 1991) and anthropological (Girard, 1977; 1986; 1987) studies, René Girard has documented and analyzed this phenomenon which he terms 'mimetic desire'. This desire should not be seen as something in the head of the agent, either conscious or unconscious, but rather as his doing in context. It is mimetic because the agents's action reveals a strange effort towards the same or similar objects: 'literary recognition, money, notoriety, his facility with language, his wife'. And because they strive for the same objects, this rivalry often leads to conflict.

I imagined storms, dramatic scenes, immense shouting matches with Sachs before any of this [marrying Fanny] could happen. Perhaps it would finally come to blows, I thought. I found myself ready for anything, even the idea of squaring off against my friend failed to shock me.

It is also mimetic because as it intensifies what was originally a tendency to choose and value the objects of one's desire through others progressively invades all of the agent's existence. It creates, as a consequence, remarkable patterns of differences and resemblances. Sachs both renounces writing fiction soon after discovering Aaron's work and goes around impersonating him, pretending to be the famous author his friend has become and that

Sachs once was to Aaron's eyes. Mimetic desire is neither a motive of an agent's actions, nor his intent or an unconscious drive, it is more of a regularity that his behaviour reveals, or rather that their behaviours reveal. For by its very nature it relates agents to each other and can be perceived only when the actions of more than one person are seen synoptically. Because it is such a regularity, a pattern, visible in both what agents do and what they have to say about it<sup>7</sup>, the indeterminacy of certain actions, our inability to ever know the 'whole truth' about them is not an obstacle. To the contrary, when it is seen as a characteristic of certain behaviours, an uncertainty about their status as intentional actions, rather than as a blanket claim about the past, this indeterminacy is an important fact about these behaviours. Aaron's confused account of his affair with Sachs's wife does not preclude us from suspecting that his desire for her was driven by his admiration for him. His confused interpretation of what happens constitutes, to the opposite, part of the evidence which leads us to that conclusion.

### Conclusion

The sciences of memory, Hacking argues, fail to discover the truth about the past because often there is no such truth to be discovered: the past is to some extent indeterminate. We should therefore be prudent concerning the claims of such sciences and judge them by their moral import rather than their epistemic value. But can we do as he invites us to do and divide ethics from knowledge? Is the truth value of a "retrospective recollection" indifferent to its moral consequences? Is a false recollection conducive to autonomy? A step away from bad faith? But what is a false recollection if the past is indeterminate?

The indeterminacy of the past is an artifice of recollection, an illusion of the first person's point of view, the result of a person's natural preference for herself. When one reviews his past, one can always fear that the present explanation of what happened is preferred to the past explanation simply because it is now one's own. The only way to protect oneself against such danger is to take account of interpretations of our past which are not our own. This is usually done by accessing sources of information exterior to memory. Once that is done it rapidly becomes clear that present action may be just as indeterminate. When there is such indeterminacy, it constitutes important information about the agent's behaviour. Replacing it by a definite "retrospective re-description" for moral reasons to enhance the autonomy of the agent is both a sham and an extreme form of the consequentialism Hackings rejects. To conclude, like Aaron, that Fanny's seduction of him and her unfaithfulness to Sachs was a "luminous gesture of self-sacrifice" is bad faith. It constitutes a refusal to face the indeterminacy of what happened. What Aaron does not want to accept is that Fanny's actions are to some extent indeterminate, that up to a point there is no fact of the matter as to what intentional action she did, for that also applies to him, to his past and his present. Benjamin Sachs's loss of identity does not come from a failure of memory. It comes from his progressive entrance into a world where there is no fact of the matter about the actions he performed. Did he want to seduce Maria Turner, the ex-lover of Aaron? Did he fall off that railing or did he try to commit suicide? Why did he

kill Reed Dimagio? Why did he then become a husband to Dimagio's wife and a father to his child? Why did he turn to violent action? Why did he blow up scale-model replicas of the statute of liberty? Why did he impersonate Peter Aaron? After a while there are no more satisfactory answers to these questions. Or, if there are any, they will not be in terms of intentional action. If autonomy is our moral ideal then it may be important for us to know when we may claim that our behaviour constitutes intentional action and when it does not.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> We do not mean to imply in saying this that the sciences of memory, nor the indeterminacy of the past, are the sole concerns of Hacking. *Rewriting the Soul* is a complex work which tackles many of the topics Hacking has addressed for several years such as "looping effects" and "the construction of human kinds." With much of Hacking's interesting work, we have no particular quarrel. See Hacking, 1986, 1991, and 1999.

<sup>2</sup> It is unclear whether Hacking believes this is true only of 'personal' histories or of history in general. In *Rewriting the Soul*, he carefully avoids discussion of revisionist history as applied to periods such as Nazi Germany. See, *Rewriting the Soul*, Ch. 15, pp.210-220.

<sup>3</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe *Intention* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957, pp. 34-49.

<sup>4</sup> If it is irrelevant, then it seems that Hacking in spite of all his oratory precautions and his high standing moral ground comes dangerously close to saying that there is no fact of the matter concerning child abuse, but that it does not matter, as long as such accusations can help some young women to achieve autonomy in their life. Consequentialism with a vengeance!

<sup>5</sup> Hacking is not a relativist about what he calls "natural" or "indifferent" kinds (Hacking, 1999), but these are not directly at issue here.

<sup>6</sup> In a sense, we can say that Benjamin has even won in the case of Aaron and Fanny's romantic episode. For there never was any question of Fanny leaving Sachs in her mind. What she wanted was a form of 'ménage à trois' where she would retain both her lover and her husband. It is Aaron who forces her to choose between Sachs and him.

<sup>7</sup> What an agent has to say about his behaviour is clearly part of his action. Whether it is self-deceptive or guided by a desire for truth may be beside the point, in any case it remains part of what he or she does.

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# Controversy about the Traditional Theory in Aesthetics

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## 1. Weitz on Traditional Theories

In the very first lines of his famous article – ‘The Role of Theory in Aesthetics’ – Morris Weitz tells us that each of the great art theories (Emotionalism, Intuitionism, Formalism, Organicism, Voluntarism, Intellectualism) converge in a logically vain attempt to provide the defining properties of art. Weitz tries to survey some of the aesthetic theories in order to see if they do include adequate statements about the nature of art.<sup>1</sup> But instead of giving us exact descriptions of these theories, he provided us with only a very scant summary. Thus, even if Weitz were correct in thinking that all theories converged in an essential definition of art, he does not provide any further arguments for his conviction.

Some aestheticians have tried to do justice to the traditional theories by suggesting that aesthetic theories were not attempting to offer essentialist definitions of art.<sup>2</sup> Considering such thinkers as Kant, Hume, Bosanquet, Collingwood, Dewey, Herbert Read and Thomas Munro, they came to a conclusion that discussions of art occur in response to a variety of questions. For instance, the elucidation of current concept of art, the justification and re-evaluation of art, and the ranking of the arts in a hierarchy of importance. It has even been argued that anti-essentialists themselves make an essentialist mistake in supposing that traditional theories of aesthetics share a common property.

No one can doubt that those thinkers (in particular, Hume, Kant, and Dewey) are the most distinguished figures in the history of aesthetics. Furthermore, I am inclined to think that the observations concerning their aesthetic theories made by aestheticians are mainly correct and instructive. Unfortunately, those critics left untouched the aesthetic theories offered by Weitz. Therefore, in order to evaluate Weitz’s account of aesthetic theories and to see if the criticisms concerning his account strike home, it is necessary to consider just theories mentioned by Weitz. This is my purpose in this paper.

## 2. Some Introductory Remarks

Weitz pointed out that theories are inadequate in many different ways: some theories are circular (Bell-Fry), some emphasize too few properties (Bell-Fry, Croce), some are too general (organicism), and some rest on dubious principles (Parker, Croce).<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that all these alleged fallacies concern the rules for definition by genus and difference. In spite of this, it is reasonable to ask whether the variety of mistakes mentioned suggest that these theories do not have a common purpose. Weitz’s views are clearly Wittgensteinian, but it would be more consistently Wittgensteinian to think that aesthetic theories do not share the common property suggested by Weitz.

Secondly, even if all traditional theories have searched for definition of art, it is still not clear what exactly they have searched for. The precise characterization of theories and their purposes tend to elude us, since the term 'definition' is a tricky concept. There are many types of definitions: stipulative, lexical, precisising, theoretical, nominal, recursive, real, ostensive, and definitions of relative terms.<sup>4</sup> The reason why I pay attention to this trivial fact is that every type of definition intended by theories implies its own criteria of evaluation. It is important to insist that definitions serve different purposes: they are used to increase vocabulary, to reduce vagueness, to explain theoretically, and to influence attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Emotionalism

Let me draw your attention to a couple of shortcomings in Weitz's account. As we know, Weitz did not give any analysis of Tolstoy's theory in his article. Nevertheless, Weitz did give the impression that Tolstoy allied himself to an emotionalist position that opposed formalist conceptions of art. He argued that 'Tolstoy, Ducasse, or any of the advocates of this theory find that the requisite defining property is not significant form but rather the expression of emotion in some sensuous public medium. Without projection of emotion in some piece of stone or words or sounds, etc., there can be no art. Art is really such embodiment.' The reference to a formalist like Bell is strange, as Bell presented his views almost twenty years later than Tolstoy did. Besides, as it is evident in Chapters 2 and 5, Tolstoy was criticizing the theories such as the Beauty theory, the physiological-evolutionary definition, the experimental definition, and that of Scully. Roughly speaking, these theories have nothing to do with the formalism.

Furthermore, I think that to attach the term 'emotionalist' to Tolstoy can be highly misleading. According to Weitz emotionalism is the view that art is sensuous embodiment of emotions. But it cannot be Tolstoy's view since this is exactly the view Tolstoy attached to Eugene Veron, (that is, the experimental definition of art) which was a target of Tolstoy's criticism.

When we scrutinize how Tolstoy did carry out his 'defining' of art, the Weitzian interpretation of Tolstoy is revealed as inadequate.

Firstly, consider how Tolstoy argued against the beauty theory of art: '[W]hat is considered the definition of art is no definition at all, but only a shuffle to justify existing art.'<sup>6</sup> Tolstoy's statement is interesting for it indicates a specific criterion, which a proper definition of art must possess. According to Tolstoy the definition should not only be concerned with existing art. I think that if Tolstoy's purpose were a factual report on the essence of art, then he would not have stipulated this normative criterion. We can assume that all classificatory theories of art concern only existing art.

Secondly, Tolstoy declares that many well-known works of art (such as Wagner's new operas and Baudelaire's verses) are not art. It is commonly believed that Tolstoy even denies artistic status of his own writings saying that only *A Prisoner of the Caucasus* and *God Sees the Truth but Waits* are works of art.<sup>7</sup> This opinion is not, however, correct. Tolstoy explicitly says in a footnote how he evaluate his own works: 'I consign my own

artistic productions to the category of bad art, excepting the story 'God sees the Truth', which seeks a place in the first class, and 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus', which belongs to the second.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this, Tolstoy claims that many works taken to be non-art are, in fact, art. His example of artistic activity is of a boy talking about his encounter with a wolf. According to Tolstoy all our life is surrounded by works of art of every kind from cradlesong, mimicry, jest, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils up to church services, monuments, buildings, and triumphal processions. He next goes on to say that by 'art we do not mean all human activity transmitting feelings, but only that part which we for some reason select from it and to which we attach special importance'.<sup>9</sup>

Briefly, if Tolstoy had intended to define art in the way Weitz attributes to him, then he could not have possibly presupposed that cradlesongs, the ornamentation of utensils, triumphal processions and the 'wolf story' are examples of art, but not Baudelaire's verses and Wagner's operas. I think that neither an occasional mistake nor an artistic (or philosophic) shortsightedness led Tolstoy to say these strange things about art. Rather he was discontent with 'existing art (of the upper class)'.<sup>10</sup> For Tolstoy art was a thing of vital importance. Declaring wittingly his 'inadequate' convictions about art he tried re-evaluate and to reform the artistic principles of high art.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.1. Evaluative or Classificatory?

It has been argued that Tolstoy confuses an evaluative and classificatory sense of 'art'.<sup>12</sup> Building on this point it has been assumed that Tolstoy's work has to be classificatory. However, any confusion here does not imply that Tolstoy's work had to have a classificatory or descriptive aim. We could agree with the previous accusation even if Tolstoy's explicit purpose was to present a wholly evaluative theory. Further, it is sheer nonsense to claim that Tolstoy's definition of art is too broad (or too narrow), that is, that Tolstoy's definition covers more (or less) than is traditionally considered as *les beaux-arts*. Rebukes of that kind presume (without argument) that Tolstoy was attempting a definition of art in the sense claimed by Weitz, otherwise the question of the extensional adequacy of definition will not arise.

I am not arguing that there is something fundamentally wrong with evaluative (or revisionary) theories. But we should not stop thinking about a theory simply because it has evaluative ambitions. In criticizing evaluative theories we need a different approach. What could it be? When a theory implies that 'art ought be X' it rests on at least three relevant assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that 'art, or a large part of it, does not possess that property X. Secondly, it assumes that art can and will possess this property in the future. Notice that none of the assumptions is in itself an evaluative one. On the contrary, they are factual assumptions.

In addition, such a theory involves also in some evaluative components, i.e. a theory probably give some reasons why 'art ought be X'.

In brief, we have found here a way to deal with evaluative theories. We can challenge their factual and evaluative components. It is important to notice that Weitz did not consider

any of the given aspects of aesthetic theories.

#### 4. Croce's Intuitionism: Epistemic or Metaphysic?

I believe that if Weitz asked Croce whether he searched for the essence of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, Croce's answer would have been clearly negative. Or maybe 'I beg your pardon?' But let me make some more substantial observations. There are some reasons that imply that Weitz's interpretation of Croce is not well grounded.

Firstly, it is usual in our tradition of aesthetics that in an introductory part of a paper or book an author explicitly outlines his (her) main purposes in the work. Of course this is not restricted only to analytic tradition of philosophy. To know philosopher's main purpose in his writing is an inevitable presupposition of any sensible criticism of his views. When one looks at the preparatory word of Croce's *Estetica* one is surprised by fact he says nothing about the (classificatory) purpose of his work. He only says that after the concept of aesthetic activity is specified, he will address himself to a correction of some other philosophic concepts, otherwise we can not settle many further problems.

Of course one can argue that the preparatory word of the book is not conclusive evidence for ascertaining the real purpose of his book. Perhaps this is true. But if one looks at the first chapter of the book, one sees that Croce seems only to disclose his epistemic position and nothing more: 'Knowledge has two forms: it is either *intuitive* knowledge or *logical* knowledge; knowledge obtained through the *imagination* or knowledge obtained through the *intellect*.' Therefore, one is forced to ask why Weitz thought that Croce attempted to define an essence of art in terms of necessary and sufficient properties.

Secondly, Croce presents his art theory in terms of 'intuition', 'expression' 'knowledge', 'intellect', and 'imagination'.<sup>13</sup> This indicates that an aesthetic theory can be founded on some epistemic, metaphysic, or psychological conception. The essence of art can be explained in postulates and conceptual settings of fundamental theory. Indeed, it has been argued that expressionism (e.g. Collingwood and Croce) presupposes an entire philosophical psychology, philosophy of language and communication.<sup>14</sup>

It has been suggested that one aim of these theories is supposed to be explanatory; i.e. theories try to relate artistic phenomenon to other aspects of the world and to explain the nature of artistic (or, aesthetic) value.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we have a reason to think that Croce tried to re-describe or re-explain artistic activity in terms of some fundamental (fashionable) theory.

Furthermore, Weitz took mistakenly for granted that all aesthetic theories are epistemic. He presupposes these theories to be closely connected with the identification of art. But this is not the case. We can recognize some clearly metaphysical theories.<sup>16</sup> This is an important distinction since compared to the epistemic (descriptive) theories the explanatory and metaphysical ones require different criteria of adequacy.

##### 4.1. Is Croce an Anti-essentialist?

My final argument concerns the alleged open nature of art. According to Weitz 'art' is an open concept. But it is interesting that neither Weitz nor his critics (exceptions may be Colin Lyas and Richard Shusterman) realize that Croce seems to adhere to this view as well. Consider a passage from Croce where he examines the distinction between artistic

and ordinary intuition.

The whole difference, then, is quantitative, and as such is indifferent to philosophy, *scientia qualitatum* [science of qualities]. Certain men have a greater aptitude, a more frequent inclination fully to express certain complex states of the soul. These men are known in ordinary language as artists. Some very complicated and difficult expressions are not often achieved, and these are called works of art. The limits of the expression-intuitions that are called art, as opposed to those that are vulgarly called non-art, are empirical and impossible to define. If an epigram can be art, why not a simple word? If a story, why not the news-jottings of the journalist? If a landscape, why not a topographical sketch?<sup>17</sup>

This passage indicates that Croce is quite directly an anti-essentialist. He denies that there are entrenched ontological-essential distinctions between art(ist) and non-art(ist).<sup>18</sup> This is the reason why Croce does not attempt a definition of art in the sense supposed by Weitz.

Weitz argued that Croce insisted too few properties of art. However, as Croce was not giving a strict definition of art, it makes no sense to criticize his theory in the way Weitz did. Of course, I would admit that Croce emphasize too few properties of art. But I would agree with a view that suggests that Croce's view is a result of the desire to emphasize one fact about artworks to exclusion of others.<sup>19</sup>

My contentions raise a question about the proper criticism of that kind of theory. Discussing this is not, however, my purpose here. For this reason I confine myself to only two general aspects of similar theories. Firstly I would like to ask whether these theories enlighten us new and important aspects of art; or as a pragmatist would ask, what are main consequences of these theories? Or, following B. R. Tilghman, if major aim of a theory is to relate art to other aspects of the world and human life and to explain the nature of artistic value, then we are justified in asking whether a theory really help us to understand the phenomena of art. The second kind of criticism is Cartesian in nature. Is a fundamental theory itself feasible? It could be possible that an aesthetic theory inherits all the conceptual confusions and obscurities involved in the metaphysical thinking of its fundamental theory.

## 5. Bradley on Poetry

Weitz did not say in his article where exactly Bradley has formulated his idea of organicism. It is also unclear why he called the view 'organicism' as Bradley does not use the term 'organicism' anywhere in his *Poetry for Poetry's Sake*.

As the title of his article shows, he was attending to poetry, not art as a whole. The following passage speaks in the support of this.

We are to consider poetry in its essence, and apart from the flaws which in most poems accompany their poetry. We are to include in the idea of poetry the metrical form, and not to regard this as a mere accident or a mere vehicle. And, finally, poetry being poems,

we are to think of a poem as it actually exists; and, without aiming here at accuracy, we may say that an actual poem is the succession of experiences – sounds, images, thoughts, emotions – through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can.<sup>20</sup>

While admitting that Bradley's purpose was not a definition of art one could maintain that Bradley was attempting to offer a definition of essence of poetry. I doubt this would succeed, however, since in the very first footnote Bradley says explicitly that the purpose of the latter sentence was not to give a definition of art.<sup>21</sup> In addition, even if one is interested in an essence of X it does not follow that he is interested in a definition of X as well. The idea of a distinction between definition and essence goes back to Hume.<sup>22</sup>

As you will remember, Weitz indicated that organicism was his own view in *Philosophy of the Arts*.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, we cannot identify this with Bradley's view. It may be true that as an analytic aesthetician Weitz searched for the classificatory definition of art, but I doubt this was also Bradley's intention. Bradley was a literary critic and he is known to be a proponent of the *art for art's sake*-theory. Although he did not agree completely with this view, he, nevertheless, *insisted* on the autonomy and intrinsic value of art (in fact, he said it about poetry).<sup>24</sup> It is important to notice that any insisting is always insisting the importance of something. This brings us to a relevant conclusion. Supposing that insisting of the importance of something reflects artistic preferences, no formulated theory can be a purely descriptive one.

In addition, as we know those terms such as '(organic) unity' and 'coherence' have always been used as artistic principles and not as defining features of art. The terms are used in connection with the analysis and interpretation of particular artworks. Therefore, given these observations, I doubt that Weitz's interpretation of Bradley can be correct.

## 6. Bell's Formalism

Noël Carroll disputes the claim that all theories of art are concerned with giving an essential definition. But he shares with Weitz a conviction that one aesthetician, who was explicitly committed to this kind of essentialism, was Clive Bell.<sup>25</sup> This interpretation could be derived from Bell's wholehearted declaration of what he saw as the central problem of aesthetics:

The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. ... and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from 'all other classes of objects'.<sup>26</sup>

This entire passage could give the impression that Bell was striving for a definition of art. Despite this impression, it is not clear that Bell intended to offer a general definition of art.

Before the passage quoted he refers only to visual art (pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, etc.). Hence, Weitz's thesis that Bell was engaged in a general theory of art needs some additional evidence.

Furthermore, there is a view that holds that explanatory aims of aesthetic theories have always predominated over definitional aims. Robert Matthews has pointed out that the opening paragraph of Bell's Preface to *Art* clearly shows that Bell has an explanatory idea in mind:<sup>27</sup>

In this little book I have tried to develop a complete theory of visual art. I have put forward a hypothesis by reference, to which the respectability, though not the validity, of all aesthetic judgement can be tested, in the light of which the history of art from paleolithic days to the present becomes intelligible [...]. Everyone in his heart believes that there is a real distinction between works of art and all other objects; this belief my hypothesis justifies. We all feel that art is immensely important; my hypothesis affords reason for thinking it so. In fact, the great merit of this hypothesis is that it seems to explain what we know to be true. Anyone who is curious to discover why we call a Persian carpet or a fresco by Piero della Francesca a work of art, and a portrait-bust of Hadrian or a popular problem-picture rubbish, will here find satisfaction. He will find, too, that to the familiar counters of criticism – e.g., 'good drawing,' 'magnificent design,' 'mechanical,' 'unfelt,' 'ill-organised,' 'sensitive' – is given, what such terms sometimes lack, a definite meaning' (pp. v-vi).<sup>28</sup>

I conclude that instead of evaluating Bell's theory solely in terms of its extensional adequacy, relevant criticism would have to demonstrate that these explanatory ambitions are misconceived.

There is further problem with Weitz's interpretation of Bell. Weitz and Kennick suggested that Bell was looking for the common denominator of art. They also thought that when Bell saw the paintings of Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, he was quick to realize that subject matter was not of prime importance in them. It is well known that Bell was strongly influenced by modern French art. But it does not follow that modern French art revealed him what art is. I think Bell was a good art *connoisseur* before he saw the paintings of Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse. In a sense, these works of art did not make him smarter. He realized not that 'academic' art is not art, but that the taste of the Edwardian Englishmen was out of date. If this is true, it is difficult to see why Bell should be committed to the purpose Weitz ascribes to him.

Thus I believe that although Bell framed his statements in terms of descriptive language he also gave his texts a revisionary and explanatory purpose. Even if Bell proclaims in his work that his purpose is to reveal the essence of art, it is not sufficient to ascribe to him only this stated purpose (as Weitz has done).



## 7. Parker and the Assumption of Philosophy of Art

In the very first words of his paper Parker disclosed his conviction about history of aesthetic theories: 'The assumption underlying every philosophy of art is the existence of some common nature present in all the arts.'<sup>29</sup> Parker's convictions may be correct. But even if it is true that every philosophy of art shares this assumption, it does not follow that every philosophy of art is attempting to provide a definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Firstly, it seems that concepts such as 'common nature' or 'common denominator' deserve some clarification. Parker, Bell and Kennick, presuppose that 'common denominator' and 'essence' of art are identical concepts. But in my opinion a 'common denominator (nature)' implies a necessary and not a sufficient condition for art. Secondly, it may be true that the assumption in question (whatever it means) is an implicit or tacit presupposition of philosophy of art, and the great part of theories are not engaged in to make this assumption explicit.

It is worth noting how Parker interprets the relations among the theories. His short review of aesthetic theories is presented in terms of 'reactions', 'opposite attitudes towards art', 'protesting' and 'opposite motive'.<sup>30</sup> This seems to imply (contrary to Parker and Weitz) that the history of defining art is anything but an attempt to provide a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions; it seems to imply that aesthetics is a battle of several artistic ideologies. To emphasize, there seems to be an inconsistency between Parker's convictions about the main assumption of aesthetics and his account of actual history of aesthetics.

Parker draws two conclusions from his consideration of history of defining art. There are two conditions that a successful definition of art must satisfy. Firstly, since art is a complex phenomenon, a definition of art must be complex and involve many characteristics. Secondly, he argued that a definition of art must reveal a deep connection between art and life.<sup>31</sup>

There is no trouble with the first condition. The shortcoming of the second one is that it is incompatible with the aim that Weitz ascribes to aesthetic theories. It seems that Parker's view concerning the definition of art does not involve a value-neutral factual report on art. He provides a criterion for good art not a good definition of art.

However this is not a successful argument against Weitz's account of Parker since it does not challenge that account. Nevertheless, Lee Brown has indicated that Parker openly admitted in his earlier book that he considers himself to be presenting his own preferences and trying persuade his readers of the soundness of those preferences.<sup>32</sup>

## 8. Intellectualism and History of aesthetics

At the beginning of his article, Weitz seems to speak in the name of history of aesthetics: 'For, in spite of the many theories, we seem no nearer our goal today than we were in Plato's time'<sup>33</sup>. But his examples of theories are derived from only the last two hundred years. Tolstoy presented his view in 1898, Croce and Bradley about two or three years later, Bell in 1914, and Parker in 1939. What is the 'tradition' constituted by those

theories? What about theories offered by Aristotle, Bataille, Kant, and Lessing? Even if it is true that all the theories he mentioned have the purpose Weitz ascribes to them, he neglected many others.

In the first list of theories Weitz did indicate a theory he called Intellectualism. Unfortunately, he says no word about this theory in the following parts of his article, nor does he mention the proponents of this theory. Nevertheless, in his earlier book Weitz did attach term "Intellectualism" to Neo-Thomist (Maritain) and Marxist (Plekhanov) theory of art.<sup>34</sup> I believe that no serious aesthetician can argue that Plekhanov is a traditional theorist in the sense of Weitz. In addition, it is hardly surprising to find that the main function of Maritain's theory is readjustment of our attitudes towards art as a whole: he ask us to look at it differently, to think of it as of a kind with things with it would ordinarily be contrasted.<sup>35</sup>

## 9. Objections.

So far I have tried to argue that Weitz is mistaken about the descriptive definitional orientation of all the theories he mentions.

There could be three objections to my arguments. Did I want argue that no (or no great part of) theory since Plato has had the aim at defining art? This criticism is not justified because 'defining', as used in this objection, refers to all kinds of activities that claim something illuminating about art. I think that we certainly can use the concept of defining in this broad sense, but my purpose here has been to consider only the very restricted notion of defining art given by Weitz.

Notice that I do not deny that the theories I have described are fallacious *if* we take them *as* projects that aim at definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In this sense Weitz could be correct. But Weitz omitted a conditional approach to these theories of art. Theories may be classificatory, descriptive reformative, evaluative, explanatory, normative, etc. It is not my purpose here to consider all differences among these theories but as an analytic aesthetician I would like to analyze them systematically.

Secondly, someone might object that nothing depends on my criticism of Weitz; i.e. even if my observations are correct they have on slightest weight to the rest of Weitz's view, for example- that art has no definable essence.<sup>36</sup>

This is a serious challenge to my views. But even if my arguments have not the slightest weight in relation to the rest of Weitz's views, it remains true that there *is* a misconception in Weitz's famous paper.

Thirdly, one might object that my criticism of Weitz rest on a misinterpretation of his views. It could be argued that, at the end of his article, Weitz tried to rehabilitate aesthetic theories suggesting that their worth lies in trying to justify and to correct criterions of evaluating art that previous theories have neglected or distorted. Therefore, Weitz did suppose that definitions provided by the theories should be understood as honorific ones.

But if the greater part of the theories are not involved with the project of defining art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions (as my arguments suggest), then the

Weitzian rehabilitation of traditional theories loses its point. What is needed is to rescue theories from the Weitzian interpretation. Moreover, if the latter interpretation of Weitz is true, then we are forced to conclude that Weitz commits himself to another suspicious generalization: that is, that all definitions of art proposed by aesthetic theories are honorific definitions.<sup>37</sup>

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Morris Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', in F. J. Coleman (ed.), *Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 84-94.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Brown, 'Traditional Aesthetics Revisited', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. XXIX, (1971), pp. 343-351; T. J. Diffey, 'Essentialism and the Definition of "Art"', - *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 13 (1973), pp. 103-120; Milton H. Snoeyenbos, 'On the Possibility of Theoretical Aesthetics', *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 9, (1978), pp. 108-121; Robert J. Matthews, 'Traditional Aesthetics Defended', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 38 (1979), pp. 39-50; Benjamin R. Tilghman, 'Reflections on Aesthetic Theory', in G. Dickie, R. Scalfani, R. Roblin (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 160-170.

<sup>3</sup> Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics' p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Irving M. Copi and Keith Burgess-Jackson, 'Definition', In *Informal Logic* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), pp. 132-162. P. T. Geach, 'Definition' in *Reason and Argument* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), pp. 38-45. Richard Robinson, *Definition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> Copi and Burgess-Jackson, 'Definition', pp. 132-137.

<sup>6</sup> Leo N. Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett, 1996), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Definition*, p. 168.

<sup>8</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., ch. 5.

<sup>10</sup> It is noted by Stanley Bates that these peculiarities of his theory do not trouble Tolstoy, who *decries* the assumption that only the fine arts are art, *denouncing* the claim that artistic activity is the exclusive province of the professional artist. See his 'Tolstoy Evaluated Tolstoy's Theory of Art', in G. Dickie, R. Scalfani, R. Roblin (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 64-72. Italics are mine.

<sup>11</sup> Clearly enough, Tolstoy was not worried about the philosophical details of 'essence', 'definition', but it may be that he used real definition as the adoption and recommendation of ideal. See Robinson, *Definition*, pp. 165-168.

<sup>12</sup> Haig Khatchadourian, *The Concept of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 282. Bates, 'Tolstoy Evaluated: Tolstoy's Theory of Art', pp. 64-72.

<sup>13</sup> Benedetto Croce, 'Art as Intuition', in E. Vivas and M. Krieger (eds.), *The Problems of Aesthetics* (New York: Rinehart, 1965), pp. 69-90.

<sup>14</sup> Tilghman, 'Reflections on Aesthetic Theory', pp. 165.

<sup>15</sup> Matthews, 'Traditional Aesthetics Defended', p. 49; Tilghman, 'Reflections on Aesthetic Theory', pp. 165.

<sup>16</sup> See the distinction, in James C. Anderson, 'Aesthetic Concepts of Art', Noël Carroll (ed.) *Theories of Art Today* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 65-92. B.R. Tilghman, *But Is It Art?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Croce, 'Art as Intuition', p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> See also Colin Lyas, *Aesthetics* (London: UCL Press), pp. 98-105, and Richard Shusterman 'Analytic Aesthetics, Literary Theory, and Deconstruction' - *The Monist*, vol. 69, (1986), pp. 22-38.

<sup>19</sup> Beryl Lake, 'A Study of the Irrefutability of Two Aesthetic Theories', in William Elton (ed.), *Aesthetics and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), pp. 100-113.

<sup>20</sup> A. C. Bradley, 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake', *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Diffey, 'Essentialism and the Definition of "Art"', p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> Bradley, 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake', pp. 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Noël Carroll, 'Clive Bell's Aesthetic Hypothesis', in G. Dickie, R. Sclafani, R. Roblin. (eds.) *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 84-95.

<sup>26</sup> Clive Bell, 'Significant Form', in John Hospers (ed.), *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), pp. 87-99.

<sup>27</sup> Matthews, 'Traditional Aesthetics Defended', p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> De Witt H. Parker, 'The Nature of Art', in E. Vivas and M. Krieger (eds.), *The Problems of Aesthetics* (New York: Rinehart, 1965), pp. 90-105.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-93.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-94.

<sup>32</sup> Brown 'Traditional Aesthetics Revisited', p. 347.

<sup>33</sup> Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', p. 84.

<sup>34</sup> Morris Weitz, *Philosophy of the Arts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 29-

<sup>35</sup> W. E. Kennick, 'Definition and Theory in Aesthetics,' in W. E. Kennick (ed.), *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1964), pp. 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> I would like to thank Elmer-H. Duncan, Helen Eenmaa, Peter Lamarque, Derek Matravers, Margit Sutrop for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. And I would also like to thank Lee Brown, Terence Diffey, Richard Kamber, Graham McFee, and Dabney Townsend for being good consultants to me.

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# Judgement in James: Aspects of a Problem in Literature and Philosophy

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It is almost impossible, in what I hope can still licitly be spoken of as our culture, not to be self-conscious: to be aware of oneself as being under the basilisk gaze of others, of being evaluated by them and vulnerable to immolating rejection by them. We do not define ourselves as people (the truism has it) but are defined by those with whom we come into contact. And it is our awareness of their opinion of us which furnishes our consciousness of self. Very early on we start to get an idea of ourselves as being this or that kind of person, and, as such, cannot find a way of making ourselves immune to the ever present threat of having immolating judgement passed upon us. The person who professes not to care what others think of him but rather to rest content in his confidence of how own worth is simply guilty of *mauvaise foi*. As long as one claims to *be* anything, that claim must in the final analysis rest on the endorsement of others if lit is to be valid.

However, the processes whereby we, as it were, negotiate what *kind* of objectification will be imposed on us are extremely complex and subtle. And because they are not in themselves susceptible to logical analysis they remain substantially opaque to inspection through cognitive activity. Indeed, if challenged we should probably deny that we were engaged in any such process at all! Yet it is perfectly obvious that we show great ingenuity in negotiating the relational dangers of everyday life. In order to carry out these kinds of operation we must perforce place our trust in the kind of subjective evidence which it is almost impossible to decompose. How – to take examples recurring in the novel at hand, or come to that in *any* novel – how does one know the difference between a true and a fake smile, or become aware of a current of a current of sexual interest between two people where none was ever suspected? The world to which our intuitive sensitivity gives us access is the intricate and very finely balanced subjective world in which we conduct our relations with other, register and react to the impressions we give and receive, administer and respond to offers or threats of annihilation. Such is the delicacy involved in our traffic with each other in these respects, and such are the dangers inherent in them, that we normally don't comment on what we are up to: language, it seems, is far too crude to be allowed to clothe, as it were, our transactions in the coarse obviousness of words; words which objectify and make concrete a fluid sensitivity which does not have to answer for its insights and actions or keep to its promises. And yet we rely on this unexamined and mercurial faculty to tell us the truth about what is going on far more than any verbal account we give ourselves as explanations or excuses. This is the faculty whereby we cope with the real world of threatening and dangerous liaisons; language, the faculty which mediates the mythical,

objective world which we would all much rather believe in. Depending upon the heaviness of a person's investment in the mythical world, it is entirely possible for him or for her to disclaim any trust in or respect for the sort of knowledge which intuitive sensitivity makes available. Possible, that is, to disconfirm it either in oneself or in others. In effect, such an insistence is tantamount to a denial of the evidence of our own senses; a rejection of what a more profound stratum of understanding is known to be the case. Interestingly, there is a minority of people – Ralph Touchett, in James' *Portrait* appears to be a piad-up member – who seem to find it impossible *not* to trust the experience which their subjective sensitivity gives them, even though they would rather abandon it. They would rather not have the pain of knowing the truth and of inflicting what they know to be true upon others (or, if you prefer, *donating* such knowledge to them). But they cannot find or seem to find the secret of escape from it which others have with relative ease developed.

So one main escape route offered by our culture from the indeterminacies which our subjective understanding reveals us to is via objectification. By which I mean a willingness to cede everything, or everything that matters, to set of socially determined myths which offer clearly to delineate our place in the world and the ways in which we may relate to each other. Within a competitive social organisation-and James' post-bellum America is probably a good instance-what you are is scarcely conceivable except in terms of how you score against others. There is, within such a set-up, relatively little room for the subjectivity of the person; and plenty of room, relatively speaking, for such things as self-merchandising and impression-management. The most seasoned operator in James' ecology is of course the newly-wedded husband of *The Portrait's* heroine. And nowhere is he more seasoned than in the episode in which he leads the (in his presence) rather feckless Caspar Goodwood up the garden path by plying him with fictions about his marriage to Isabel being an unsullied bower of bliss; blithely conning him (er. at any rate trying to con him) into accepting attachment to Isabel as the very lineaments of gratified desire.

What one is in such a context thus becomes an matter of social transaction: a constant monitoring of the way in which one appears to others, and a developing expertise in handling the conceptual apparatus and values of what for want of a more elegant word I have called objectivity. A matter, that's to say, of ingesting and thoroughly accepting the standards of an objectifying culture. What does the other think of me? becomes the most bedeviling question which can be asked: indeed the only one worth asking in practice. And the very posing of such a question, in terms of comparison and judgement, in turn breeds a technology of manipulation and deceit in which plausibility of front becomes all important.

This is the operational psychology adapted to, and embodied in, people who have a confident appreciation of themselves as satisfactory objects; and an ability to extort from others a validation of how they wish to appear. But what this psychology is of course helpless to gloss or to elucidate is the moral and philosophical validity of this view of being and behaving. Above all, it does not question whether it is in itself legitimate to see people as "being" anything, or indeed as having "selves" in the sense of objectively determinable ensembles of characteristics, susceptible of once-and-for-all-enunciation. So long as we

take for granted an objectifying culture and its mechanistic principles we arrive quite naturally at a "reality" in which the essence of relations between people lies in management, exploitation, treachery, performance to a principle of profit and competition; and in which anything resembling moral judgements if not actually impossible to institute are quaint in function.

The objectivist mind, which can tolerate a concept only if the phenomena involved can be converted into concrete and manipulable commodities (like loneliness, or loveliness) attempts to remove from our ways of knowing the necessity ("dire" being the inseparable cliché-modifier) for courage and hardihood. From an unpondered adherence to rules it argues that what cannot be externalized, predicted, checked, cannot be fit for evaluation. The subjectivist mind, for whom knowledge is protocol not property and which: is prepared to risk making foolish mistakes and the consequent public opprobrium, knows articulately or otherwise that there is no method for knowing the truth and for knowing oneself or other minds, since such knowledge takes place as it were in the very forefront of our consciousness and leaves out no part of us which can sit back and invigilate the proceedings. There *are* some things, to be sure, which we should no doubt automatically be aware of: for example, of self-justifying or comforting verbal constructions or labels or diagnoses. But in the end, it is only trust in one's subjective judgement that will inform us of success or failure. And the ground of judgement is personal experience, which alone can prompt us to make or to accept the kinds of judgements which have to do with finding our way back to a world we have all but forgotten how to name. It is of course true that subjective *opinions* – defined as personal beliefs – can have no privileged claim to truth. Subjective *experience* – what goes on in our own lives, which a mythifying culture operates to obscure from view – is on the other hand the *only* ground upon which truth can rest, and generates a form of knowing which does not have to be fashioned into a monument to acquisitive cleverness, or studied academically, or hoarded in technical expertise, or even spelt out articulately; but is, rather, safeguarded to considerable extent from such petrifications precisely *because* it cannot be requisitioned for use in the business of acquiring things, friends, or reputation.

In using the word "moral", as I did a moment ago, I don't of course mean moralistic; but, rather, to point to the necessity for taking a deliberate stance (as distinct from an inherited or established position complacently occupied) on the question of how we should conduct ourselves with each other; of taking an interest in, and being concerned with, the way in which a person develops (as, say, Ralph does in his commerce with Isabel), and advocating (as, again, Ralph does, however tacitly) those standards which would seem to be truly in the person's best interests, and so on. For the objectified individual, all such questions are bound to be fraught with threat and difficulty: having indeed the status of object promises release from some of the terrors attendant upon subjectivity – from some forms of emotional pain, isolation, responsibility; and from the threat of fundamental failure and the need for personal decisiveness. To stand *for* something in any sphere is of course to risk making an ass of yourself. Objective status delivers a certain anodyne neutrality with respect to the conventionalities which actually govern behaviour. To stand for something in any department

of living is to make judgements and invite the prospect of being marked down and found wanting. But it is also the only way in which social evolution can take a truly *moral* direction: it is the inescapable consequence of recognising, and taking seriously, the fact that it is *we* who make the world, not it or Them.

The relation of judgement-by-others to "good judgement" and of both to power and policy, knowledge and sincerity, and most important perhaps, to integrity of action and impulse is the theme that most interests me here. But, granting what seems at times an almost pathological need to retreat behind a coy ponderousness, James himself is far too intelligent a novelist not to be well aware of this problematic. I'm thinking of his announced interest in *The Art of the Novel* – amounting, almost, to a plot in every sense against his own creatures! – in, as he says, "our own precious liability to fall into traps and be bewildered."<sup>1</sup> I've in mind, as well his positively wise understanding of the fact that, as he says in the same place, "if we were never bewildered there would never be a story to tell about us." His fable of identity asks us to conceive a young and very prepossessing woman handsomely equipped with a mind of her own as well as with wit, imagination and smashing good looks. When Isabel Archer arrives in Europe she sees the world (ad indeed being not only an American but an American of such a time and place she can hardly help see it) as "a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action". In this capacity, she turn aside from various suitors who in addition to wealth, title, and devotion, are (to put in no higher), eligible personally in a way that accords with the standards she has set herself. Following nonetheless her own path she migrates by a devious route through disillusionment to a penultimate apprehension of the future, in the double sense of seeing and fearing it to be "a dark narrow alley with a dead wall at the end."<sup>2</sup> It's a sort of progress, no doubt about it, precisely to the degree that a concept of freedom as involving unobstructed discharge of personal energy is exchanged for a notion of independence of which Kantians might approve, involving as it does acceptance of limits and a distinction between goodness and happiness.

And to the degree that any distinction *is* in fact made as between freedom and independence as being related but, in the end quite different things, Isabel may be said to have advanced a fair distance along the road from blindness towards clarity of understanding: from "judging only from the outside ... only to amuse yourself!" (as Lord Warburton puts it in an uncharacteristic access of exasperation) to passing sentence of oneself as having been remiss in sagacity and perspicaciousness. Remiss, that is, in "knowing something about human affairs beyond what other people think it compatible with propriety to tell me." The nature of her choice and her manner of exercising it couldn't be more different from, say, that deployed more or less notoriously by Donald Davidson's "akrasic", who sees clearly the better course but through misguided conviction not to say pigheadedness elects to seize the worse. It is – though here's the rub! – "a choice before all the world"; conscientiously not impulsively made; grounded in self-knowledge or at any rate in a *kind* of self-knowledge (in this case what James calls her conscious "appetite for renunciation") and admitting of the idea and the fact of suffering as essentially accidental. It is to this extent remarkably undeluded, alert as to motives, and obedient to Ralph Touchett's fraternal injunction (not



untinged with irony) to "judge everyone and everything for yourself!". But it is also and by the same token deceived in a common-or-garden way as to *ends*; the principal end at the drama's inception being in the heroine's words "to marry the person one likes" and "to be free to follow out a good felling."<sup>3</sup> If we are to speak of Isabel as being perplexed in a way she is not fully equipped to concede urgently and in need of enlightenment, we might say – risking sophistry – that it is perhaps not least as regards the distinction between liking and liking to like.

The difficulty in pursuing, as Isabel is made to pursue, a painful process of undeception, is that we have to get used to the idea that we can do without – indeed *must* to some extent do without – the very things we have always understood to be indispensable for the reliable establishment of the truth and of personal wellbeing, if indeed we *are* to establish them there is, no doubt, a sense in which self-knowledge becomes important to such an enterprise. But this is not perhaps the kind of knowledge which I rather suspect most of think will prove useful. It is all too easy to interpret the injunction "Know Thyself!" as a recommendation to become aware of that which one is in a kind of fixed and finished way – *Portrait of a Lady* – so that one can, for example, put oneself to better use in the business of securing a secular prosperity, or in staking out a territory, or putting oneself forward with a certain aplomb. Isabel pinpoints this special difficulty when she asserts that, whereas she won't give a toss for Ralph's opinion if she does marry Osmond, his opinion has, nonetheless "a certain importance. The more information one has about one's dangers, the better!". And Madame Merle puts the matter a little more brutally when she forswears all knowledge of "what people are for. I only know what I can do with them."<sup>4</sup> Knowing yourself, on this prudential view, implies vetting your strengths and weaknesses, having a "conception of gain" (Madame Merle's phrase) that limits the damage, knowing how to get what you want whilst keeping out of morally or psychologically troublesome situations. But, as I've suggested, claims to *this* kind of knowledge, even if especially if – advanced in candour and without equivocation – constitute the very essence of bad faith. Since the one "thing" that cannot be known, still less owned, let alone be regarded in a conclusively judicial light, is the subject who makes the claim, Madam Merle, her *cause sui* impassivity and her sensational self-possession notwithstanding, can be counted upon as usual to state the matter with deliciously ironic precision – and in a way that is anathema to Isabel – when she argues that one's "self" is no more and no less than all one is, does, engages with, as well as seems in effect to be. The "whole envelope of circumstances"<sup>5</sup> (her phrase) which one inhabits and reposes in (if that's the word), in which one lives and has one's being, as distinct from a "self" to be proprietorially cultivated. No small part of Isabel's embarrassment by events has, I think, to do with a hiatus in understanding touching the fact that, because we do not "possess" things like "selves", it is not only undesirable systematically to pursue theoretic knowledge of them but mistaken to suppose that the pursuit itself is doomed to anything but failure.

It remains however to clarify what *could* be usefully meant by self-knowledge, considered as the ground of "good judgement" and as a justification, or precondition, for

uttering disobliging judgements on oneself or accepting that others in some circumstances have a right, even a duty, to formulate such judgements about us. "Know Thyself!" might, I think, best be interpreted as a warning that one should, as part of a continuous process of self-suspicion, keep a beady eye trained on what one is up to. In the way that, for example, Madame Merle, in conversation with Osmond, takes a long, cool look at her actions and pillories herself for having been horrid to Isabel (telling her to her face and with strategic perversity that, as the upshot of Lord Warburton's defection, "Your husband judges you severely.")<sup>6</sup> and the same time, knows herself to have been defiled in relationship with Osmond on account of his crass instrumentalism masquerading as fastidious self-sufficiency. Another prototype is that refugee from a Dickens novel (*Bleak House* perhaps), the Countess Gemini. Look at the way in which, spilling the beans about Pansy's true progenitors, she is keen to prevent a disinterested desire (stopping just short of humanitarianism) to succour Isabel from blunting a positively gleeful compulsion to extract a maximum of pleasure from the spectacle of Mrs. Osmond's discomfiture. This species of knowing (intermixed as it is with *schadenfreude*) would, you notice, *not* mean listening to the self-extenuating accounts which we are always ready to tell ourselves. (E.g., in this instance, I'm only doing this for your good, my dear", etc., or rigmarole like "It hurts me to say it more than it does you to hear it"). Indeed, it means specifically *disregarding* such stories; treating them with sacks of salt, as a species of fairly-tale; practising a politics of doubt in connexion with oneself. The attempt, here, is to divine from conduct what might be the nature of our undertakings as distinct from deduction from first principles as from ratiocination bombinating in a void. To live our lives worrying, or attempting to worry, about the value of what we do, eschewing all regard for ourselves as certain kinds of object in the eyes of other people – or at any rate reducing such regard to the minimum – is to begin to relate to each other in what Roger Poole somewhere calls "ethical space", rather than in terms of an objective contest for power and status.

James' dealings with his *ficelle* are from this analytic viewpoint as fascinating as they are instructive to watch. She's represented as someone able to speak without reserve precisely because she knows that deep down, Isabel doesn't care a fig for her. Nor is she at all *bothered* by such lack of solicitude. The Countess isn't lumbered with – or at least, I think it fair to say is *relatively* unencumbered by – a conviction of her own comparative benignity. She's as uninterested as anyone in the novel's rarified world can hope or can have a right to be in having other people morally speaking up for trial on charges of gross misdemeanour. And so she accepts as a matter of essentially subsidiary importance (and with what, to some, is bound to look like disconcerting good cheer) the fact that most of them habitually think of her as someone who uses her head only to keep her ears from banging together. With nothing to lose, really, she can afford to judge correctly, and with a saving insouciance: unsurprisingly she is spot-on when she says, with respect to Osmond and Madame Merle's having been lovers, "You may ask how I know such a thing. I know it by the way they behaved." This looks at first sight to be impertinence but it is really a moral etiquette, and epistemological good manners to boot. Unlike knowledge of self-as-

object, the kind of knowledge being talked about here is a process that never arrives at certainty about *anything* in particular, (or, arriving at it, sets a low valuation on it) but represents, rather, a kind of running battle not to fall into muddle about ends and means. This is not acquisitive knowledge, having self-improvingly to do with what Ralph calls "power of thought and conscience", or with what the storytelling voice-over calls Isabel's "dense little group of ideas about herself"; but knowledge which constitutes one's functioning in the world as a subjectivity entity or subjective influence within it. The sort of influence wielded by the Countess edifyingly to intervene in a crisis (and so unlike Isabel's alleged "influence" with Pansy's suitors or the effect of a convent upbringing on the daughter of a good-for-nothing expatriate). The countess way of knowing things for what they are has, really, very little to do with the habit of "always summing people up"<sup>7</sup> (Lord Warburton's judgement of Isabel, not unkindly meant but not exactly flattering either) and a great deal to do with keeping in touch with reality; with recognizing – not *knowing* but *acknowledging* – what is in fact the nature of the case.

But to recognize what is the case – as, for example, when Isabel fully registers the depths of intimacy and intrigue via an initial "impression" of Osmond and Serena Merle seated "anomalously" in their drawing room – to recognise what is the case is to relinquish the support of myths. And the cardinal myth, which James is more or less deliberately in business to detonate, is the myth of "fulfillment" associated with the value-world of objectivity. A myth which of necessity involves the sedulously maintained pretence that things are not half as bad as you or I know them to be. I call it a myth; but Ralph, judging Isabel and causing her in turn to judge herself as having been fitly "punished", speaks of her as having been "ground in the mill of the conventional," though in practice both formulations amount to much the same thing. Most people, most of the time, are facing a difficult and frightening world with only very little if any of the protection afforded by unconditional love or indefinitely suspended judgement. And the only other way in which they can survive is by living to the formula of cultivated adequacy or concentrating the attention on the self-as-commodity, to be approved or applauded, censured or relegated.

But where the prevailing preoccupation is with acquisition or protection with what James calls "aspect and denomination"<sup>8</sup> rather than with moral action there is a danger of our becoming for the most part utterly impervious to the intention or significance of our conduct, which is evaluated mainly for what it achieves for the augmentation of image and advantage. Osmond of course is in this respect James' Awful Warning (it sounds like a tocsin in chapter 32). With his (he thinks) beautifully concealed craving to thought "the first gentleman in Europe"; his neurotic horror of vulgarity; his forlorn anxiety "to make people believe that his house was different from any other"; his "ambition...to please himself by exciting the world's curiosity and then declining to satisfy it" – Osmond for all his *je m'en fiche* is in this a contrived instance of How Not to Do It. But – it seems not wholly unreasonable to suggest – so is Isabel herself, in as much as her regulating concern, *pace* asseverations to the contrary, is with what she ends up as rather than with what she does. James is very adroit – chillingly adroit, even, in chapter 6 especially, though knowingness

spoils the effect – at gesturing towards her Osmond-like defendedness; her addiction to striking heroic attitudes; above all, perhaps, towards the alacrity with which she offers herself up, or submits proleptically to, inspection by the docketing gaze of the Other. “Her way of taking compliments”, we hear, “seemed rather dry: she got rid of them as rapidly as possible. But as regards this she was sometimes misjudged: she was thought insensible to them, whereas in fact she was simply unwilling to show how infinitely they pleased her.”<sup>9</sup> But the novel fixes its sights with especial acuteness on Isabel’s self-regard (to borrow *The Portrait*’s own tactical penchant for figures of vision and judgment) in describing her as falling prey to what the implied author describes as a “fatigue [which] came from the effort to appear as intelligent as she believed Madame Merle had described her, and from the fear ... of exposing-not her ignorance; for that she cared little-but her possible grossness of perception”. This is objectivity with knobs on!

There is no doubt that to find oneself a subjective adult who may to some extent take charge of his or her destiny (as distinct from “affronting” it, as Isabel purports to do) requires courage. And *that* courage can probably only be summoned up in the context of faith, i.e. the conviction that somehow what one is trying to do is worth doing. Some such conviction, I believe, inhabits Henrietta Stackpole’s superficially inane but actually quite impressive declaration, on the eve of her betrothal to the egregious Mr. Bantling, that “I think I know what I’m doing but I don’t know as I can explain”; and it also implies by negatives in her judgement of Isabel as being “far too infatuated with mere brain-power”. Madame Merle, who in Isabel’s backward glance has unconscionably contrived to “live by reason and wisdom alone”, supplies once against a counter-example. The Countess Gemini for all her carefully engineered oddity is dead on target in accruing Isabel of not being “simple enough”, and in counseling her – the cards having been so to speak laid thumpingly on the table – to “feel a little wicked for the comfort of it, for once in your life!”<sup>10</sup> And who should know better than her? Who better qualified to proffer such counsel? For the Countess knows that one can never become a *safe* success: never, without monumental self-deception, bask in the security of having become or wishing permanently to become, the satisfactory object of other peoples’ esteem. The Countess is, it seems, perfectly right to judge Madame Merle’s “success” to have been at bottom a massive failure. A failure, because this specialist in surfaces maintains her carefully adumbrated aura of superiority through on opacity of aspect which amounts to kind of blackmail in that it conjures up an almost superstitious terror in those who even contemplate calling her bluff. But the novel reasons its way from periphery to center: adjudicating Isabel without damning her; knowing her actions for what they are, and in way she is perhaps unfitted to know them, as the actions of someone who (in her own words) wished “to look down from the high places of happiness with a sense of exaltation and advantage, and judge and choose and pity.”<sup>11</sup> The midnight vigil in Chapter 52 generates an appropriate moral vertigo: not just in sifting the disturbing nature of what is revealed about the world via observation, and via reflection on what has been observed (minus, of course, the pious diagrams!) but also in meditating the consequences of being prepared to acknowledge that things may not be quite as one had thought; that, far from

being sublimely *hors de combat* one has been a vulnerable contributor to a network of complicated and dangerous relationships involving threats, pleas, embargoes, severances and dependencies. For, any acknowledgement that one has been in error (and therefore, as Ralph reminds Isabel in which is one of the novel's vital syllogisms, "in trouble"); any acknowledgement that one has been mistaken in having entertained entirely misleading assumptions about matters of crucial personal importance-; any such acknowledgement, I say, *also* requires the judgement that one's time-honoured conceit of oneself is now forfeit; and that time formerly spent was *wasted* time. And *this* kind of honesty because it is painful and self-compassionating, is detached: it helps to extend to oneself the same kind of judicial sympathy, compact of discrimination and fellow-feeling, that one would extend to others (e.g., Isabel to Madame Merle); to look upon oneself (as Isabel does in James marvelous narration, not without absolving pity) as if she were someone else; remembering that the world one lives in gives good reason for doing as one did, and recalling that having reasons is not the same as being to blame or being at fault.

So to pass an awful judgement on oneself, as Isabel comes to do, is to recognise a terrible vulnerability; to see that there is no escape from the risks which involvement with the world entails. And to ascertain this to be generally the case, as Isabel comes to see, is to begin to take apart one's machinery, to scrutinise the workings of conscience in a way that Osmond, that champion egoist, with his "air of refusing to accept anyone's valuation of himself",<sup>12</sup> is incapable of doing. This is of course an added complication to a belated trust in one's experience; as is the realization, arrived at by Isabel amidst the detritus of old Rome, that we must eventually perform the function of adults while feeling like children. The return to Rome which closes the narrative is both cause and effect of the gradual falling-away of myth, and signals a transition from subject to object, which in turn is predicated on a disillusionment as agonising as having the skin stripped slowly from one's body. But this again is really only a "problem" if one regards "fulfillment" etc. as the terminus of action and in the light of a horror of difficulty. People who see the possibility of taking some subjective charge of their lives may have to take responsibility for a quite narrow range of conduct which is likely to bring them little personal satisfaction. And to revise yesterday's estimate is to judge one's situation, as Isabel judges it, to be composed of an entirely new set of circumstances in which, very probably, there are no experts – no Ralph Touchetts – to tell us what to do, and no body of knowledge to hand to reassure us that we are not alone in such a predicament.

There is of course no way of ensuring the success of this effort, and the knowledge of having acted rightly or otherwise is, like the truth of a thing, of no permanent use. But then "usefulness" is the imperative of what for want of a better term we've been calling objective culture. In a subjective world, it is uncertainty and unpredictability which in large part constitute the *moral* nature of our conduct. If from such a viewpoint – and this, famously, translate to technique in *The Portrait* – the truth changes according to developments and alterations in our values and is a matter of direction rather than destination, then, by a parallel revision, reality, the novel intimates, lies in what we do rather than in what we tell

ourselves. And what we do arises, often, out of a passionate commitment to the lessons of our experience. It is, James is insinuating, thus in our capacity to be disturbed by the false assessments of our world that the greatest hope lies for our being able to do something about it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>R.P. Blackmur (ed.), *The Art of the Novel* [1907-9] (1934; reprint, New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1962), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>*The Portrait of a Lady* (intro. Graham Greene, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 462. [World's Classic's Series]. In the interests of economy all further page-references to this edition are grouped ... below to represent, in sequence, the citations appearing one each page of text

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit., pp. 84, 172, 613, 269, 375, 373.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., pp. 268, 260.

<sup>5</sup>Op.cit., p. 216.

<sup>6</sup>Op.cit., p. 559.

<sup>7</sup>Op.cit., pp. 597, 240, 242, 84.

<sup>8</sup>Op.cit., pp. 629, 429.

<sup>9</sup>Op.cit., pp. 467, 60, 284.

<sup>10</sup>Op.cit., pp. 618, 588, 597.

<sup>11</sup>Op.cit., p. 461.

<sup>12</sup>Op.cit., p. 570.

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## Discussion and Notes

# *Candide or the Great Unchained Being*

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Voltaire's *Candide* is a riposte to the absolute logical determinism inherent in the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, which asserts that the divine will is inexorably determined and must *necessarily* create the best of all possible worlds. Never mind that such a will would not be one at all. The optimism of the eighteenth century extends a long tradition of deterministic thought which Arthur O. Lovejoy has traced through Plato, Plotinus, Abélard, Bruno, and Spinoza.<sup>1</sup> Its premise is that in order for this to be the best of all possible worlds, the one that the supremely wise, absolutely perfect, and eternally sufficient Lord of the Universe would be infallibly inclined to create, it must be replete. Thus the principle of plenitude is claimed as the *sine qua non* for a perfect world, and the perfect world is one that contains all possible degrees of imperfection. As Alexander Pope argued in his *Essay on Man*: Static

Of systems possible if 'tis confessed  
That wisdom infinite must form the best,  
Where all must full or incoherent be,  
And all that rises, rise in due degree.

The notion of coherence inherent in the deterministic view of the world was an important one to the eighteenth-century mind, one of whose overriding concerns was to understand the causal relationships that govern a rational universe. Its logical alternative is a metaphysics of Caprice, an existential philosophy of the absurd, in which randomness, fortuity, and chance, all daughters of chaos, become the unfathomable masters of an incomprehensible universe. Anything could be or come to be, and no one thing would be more probable than any other. In an age that prided itself on being that of Reason, such an unknowable universe was obviously anathema. However, one of the concomitant conclusions of the logic of plenitude, and one which Voltaire implicitly rejects in *Candide*, is that historical progress is made a metaphysical impossibility. If the universal good requires that the world contain all possible evil, and if the universe is and has always been perfectly good, then we cannot expect ever to diminish the evil of the world. Thus the notion of plenitude constitutes a universal principle for the "Conservation of Evil."<sup>2</sup>

This doctrine was intended to beget reasoned acquiescence in the face of the inevitable and provide intellectual consolation for the evil of the world. Thus, in *Candide*, after the earthquake of Lisbon Pangloss consoles the victims "en les assurant que les choses ne pouvaient être autrement" (189). However, his argument that this is the best of all worlds should not be construed to mean that all is well within it. On the contrary, he asserts, "ceux

qui ont dit que tout est bien ont dit une sottise: il fallait dire que tout est au mieux" (180). He does not claim the absolute goodness of this world, only that any other world would necessarily be worse. As Lovejoy observes: "Those who suppose that the world might have been better fashioned do so because they fail to see that the best world must contain all possible evil" (64).

The concept of progress was a dear one to Voltaire, and he believed improvement possible not only in man's institutions, but in his nature as well. He found the optimistic doctrine that represented evil as an inevitable and inherent feature in the structure of the universe to be depressing, and he rejected the Spinozan idea that everything is bearable once we realize that it could not have been otherwise. He believed that there is a moral side to history and that mankind should be able to learn from its teaching. This is demonstrated not only in his histories, but in his *Lettres Philosophiques* as well. His sojourn in England (1726-1729) had taught him that despotic institutions can be reined in, and that government can have its hands free to do good at the same time that they are tied to do ill.

The presence of EI Dorado in *Candide* poses a dilemma to the doctrine of determinism, which must argue either that the utopia is not good, at least not as good as a world replete with evil, or that a good system need not contain so much evil. It could be argued, however, that EI Dorado is not really of this world. Upon arriving there Candide wonders about a land where "toute la nature est d'une espece si différente de la notre" (217). Thus it is within the structure of his own world with all of its evil that Candide must sow the seeds of change, and it is for this reason that he must leave the golden utopia. Despite the counsel of his two philosophizing friends Pangloss and Martin, whose advice, though fundamentally different in mood—Pangloss's optimism is opposed to Martin's pessimism—is equally deterministic, Candide never abandons hope that there may indeed be some good in the best of all worlds. His garden may not be a prelapsarian paradise of innocence, but with sweat and toil it produces the fruit that vanquish the great evils of boredom, vice and need.

### Notes and References

<sup>1</sup>With respect to the classical origin of the notion of determinism, which Lovejoy traces back to Plato's *Timaeus*, it is of interest to note that Voltaire says in his *Mélanges* that ancient Greece was the "berceau de l'art, et de l'erreur".

<sup>2</sup>Lovejoy coins this phrase in the *Great Chain of Being*, and the pseudo-scientific twist he gives it enhances the force of the irony.

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Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp.424 (Paperback); Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp.356 (Hardbound).

Both the books published in the same year are authored by two eminently qualified scholars who teach Greek and Classics at St. Andrews University in Scotland and Princeton University in the United States, respectively. Halliwell has translated Aristotle's *Poetics* for the new Loeb Classical Library as also portions of Plato's *Republic* and plays by Aristophanes. Ford has also authored on Homer's epic poetry and other aspects of Greek literature and literary history. Both have touched the same area of knowledge, i.e., philosophy of criticism in ancient Greece in its historical perspectives as the titles of the books suggest themselves. Both are exhaustive, renovative and speculative, well-read in the classics themselves and in their modern responses and interpretations. Both the authors are also aware of each other's scholarship as evident from the bibliographies. It is therefore profitable to read both the books together. Halliwell focuses on the concept of *mimesis* in Greek critical culture, the concept that lies at the core of the entire history of Western aesthetics of the representational arts. Ford probes into the very concept of criticism as it was understood by the ancient Greeks who are the founders of this discipline in the entire history of Western literary culture where *mimesis* forms a core idea. Both the books therefore are works in history of ideas.

But Ford claims that his book is a complement to the history-of-ideas approach by understanding criticism as a "social activity", and this social activity started in the history of Western (Greek) literary culture as early as the pre-literary era in comic play displayed in *Frogs* by Aristophanes in 405 B.C.—criticism was originally a public response to a song on occasions and in a context with theoretical implications. Secondly, the author claims that the present study also bridges the common division of Greek criticism into pre- and post-Platonic periods. Critical practices started from the end of archaic age in the late sixth century to the rise of poetics in the late fourth when criticism became an autonomous self-conscious discipline with its own principles and methods. Rather than presenting the rich and complex views of Plato and Aristotle, Ford pinpoints their treatments of poetry as they differed from previous approaches. On the other hand, he demonstrates how the dramatists like Aristophanes circulated different critical ideas and terms such as "poetry", "metaphor", "meter", "theory", "elegiac", "epic", "tragedy" including even the word "criticism"/ "critics" (*Kritikoi*) itself. Since the break-up of New Criticism in the 1960s the critical war, the interdisciplinarity of literary criticism along with the public awareness of and response to the traditional education in literature and social and institutional values of literary theory have all been, according to Ford, the true features of the Greek literary criticism its origin in the archaic period till the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

After a definitional set-up in the introduction the author presents, in four parts, a systematic chronological account of the rise and growth of literary criticism in different forms in different phases such as table talk, symposium, allegorical interpretation of epic, song, the origins of the word "poet", materialist poetics, politics of democracy and literary culture, theories of prose and poetry, literary genres and systems, and finally the rise of the critic in poetic contexts from Homer to Aristotle.

Ford writes: "Criticism may have no discernible beginning, but it does have a history, and this book is dedicated to tracing how the tradition of Western talk about stories, songs, and plays was crucially changed in Greece between the end of the sixth and the fourth century B.C." This development or the course of change is understood by Ford as "the origins of criticism". The success of this Greek origin of criticism lies in its admiration "for works that many style to context, that exhibit harmony, proportion, and appropriate ornament in effecting a special emotional and cognitive response in the audience—may seem to be valid in all periods". When Ford defines criticism in the Greek context he means a public act of praise or blame upon a performance of song, and

obviously the criteria of praise and blame depend upon the characteristics cited above. Ford distinguishes poetic theory or *poetics* from criticism in so far as poetics is a self-conscious attempt to offer systematic accounts of the nature of poetry in the most scientific terms available. Nevertheless criticism and poetics are interrelated because the nature of poetry, in its positive aspect, refers to the speech-making (*muthos*) that must evoke "praise" in the audience.

Ford's voluminous and meticulous probe into the origins of Greek literary criticism illuminates, it seems, its central point that whatever changes have occurred during the last two millennia in the entire course of Western criticism had, in fact, occurred archetypally, as it were, during the origin and growth of the Greek criticism as it is handled and demonstrated by him. The insight and efforts are themselves epical in their depth and dimension though not without a reservation that the advancement of ideas during the post-Greek cultural tradition has sufficiently reshaped and sophisticated our views of literature, literary studies, methodology and techniques of interpretation and criticism despite our profound obligations to the Greek masters. We cannot agree that the current social and institutional approaches to literary studies originated in the Greek culture. When Aristotle omits the linguistic issues in *Poetics* deliberately stating that these are rhetorically relevant, not of literary relevance, it is a great question how to accommodate the structuralist view of fiction's linguistic character into the Greek critical spectrum, apart from many other such innovations in the contemporary criticism.

Stephen Halliwell's book aims at (1) undertaking the searching examination of the ancient roots of the concept of *mimesis* that lies in the very core of the entire history of Western Aesthetics in understanding and evaluating artworks—from the "formative approaches of Plato and Aristotle to the innovative treatment of *mimesis* by the Neo-Platonists of late antiquity", (2) elucidating "the complex legacy bestowed on Aesthetics from the Renaissance to the twentieth century by mimeticist ways of thinking". Obviously, his approach and methodology are different from those of Eric Anerbach whose aim was to present the modes of representation of reality in different genres of Western literature of different periods of different cultures. Anerbach did not probe into the philosophical or theoretical issues of the concept of *mimesis* itself, and Halliwell feels relieved that he does not compete with Anerbach's scholarship particularly in this regard. But he is inevitably in competition with others—after McKeon's seminal essay, Goran Sorbom of Uppsala, Sweden and Ananta Sukla of India carried on extensive researches during the late nineteen sixties and seventies to explore the root of *Mimesis* that lies in the very core of the Western theories of art. Halliwell is aware of Sorbom's 1966 work only, not of his several later works where he demonstrates that *Mimesis* is not a theoretical concept: "Theory of imitation as we find it in ancient texts is not, however, a theory of art, it is a theory of pictorial representation. The ancient theory of imitation was never used to distinguish between fine arts and their products and other human skills and artifacts. The basic distinction for the ancient theory of imitation was that between pictures and real things." (1999) Sorbom's wise observations should have been taken into consideration by Halliwell. Besides, Ananta Sukla in his 1977 book, *The Concept of Imitation in Greek and Indian Aesthetics* has traced the root of the concept far beyond Homer—in the Micenean culture. His cross-cultural interpretation of the concept of imitation has not yet been countered. Ananta Sukla has clarified sufficiently the theoretical differences between the two distinct critical concepts "mimesis" and "representation" in his introduction to *Art and Representation* (2001) whereas Halliwell has confusingly identified these two concepts. He writes about the achievement of his book: "the book has a two-way perspective: it looks at antiquity from a view point conscious of the later developments of mimetic theory; and it seeks to reinterpret certain features of those developments with a better informed awareness of the complexity of ancient ideas than is to be found in most of the existing literature in the subject."

Halliwell's study of the conceptual diversities in Platonic *mimesis*, his comment that in Plato's view tragedy is a rival to philosophy in viewing the core of human life as a wholesome suffering, his observation of the critical complexities of the "mirror" image in the *Republic 10* are all deeply insightful. So also is his study of the Aristotelian *mimesis* that may rightly claim to have superseded many of the contemporary comments in the area concerned. Similarly, his views of the post-Aristotelian *mimesis* in the medieval and Renaissance periods are also commendable. The light he has thrown on *mimesis* (as also I have done in 2001) from the current postmodern perspectives of Derrida and Barthes proves the views of Alan Tormey (1971) that *Mimesis* was displaced by Representation that was displaced again by Expression appears simply superficial. Halliwell still provokes thinking on *mimesis* by the future generation of genuine scholarship.

**Subhakanta Behera, *Construction of an Identity Discourse: Oriya Literature and the Jagannath Cult (1866-1936)*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2002, pp. xviii + 244.**

Subhakanta Behera has been probing into the "Oriya cultural identity for quite a considerable time culminating probably in his Oxford D. Phil. Dissertation *Oriya Literature and the Jagannath Cult 1866-1936: Quest for Identity*" that forms the foundation of the book under review. Besides, Behera has also published a number of essays in Oriya on the subject concerned collected recently in an Oriya title, *Oriya Atmapariciti: Jijnasa O Samiksa*, Cuttack: Granthamandira, 2002, pp. 101. In all these writings Behera exhibits his erudite and perceptive inquiries that signify sincere efforts of a thinker in concentrating appropriately on a subject deserving most of its timely attention.

Cultural identity has been a pivot of intellectual activities during the last three decades of the last century. The area of this discipline is as overlapping as controversial covering almost all the branches of knowledge in humanities and social sciences. The issue calls into coordination and cross-examination several seminal topics and concepts such as nationalism, nation-state relationship, logic of identity and personal identity. Everything is what it is and not another thing, originally a Socratic idea that found its modern shape in Leibniz's definition of the identity of indiscernibles—if A and B have exactly the same properties, then they are identical. The issue of personal identity, therefore, implies that if a person has a particular group of qualities at a time or in course of time then the person continues to be the same. The possibility of such continuity has long ago been challenged by the Greek and Indian philosophers—Heraclitus and the Buddhists. In modern era the issue has been raised by Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant. When Descartes proposed that the sameness of a person might be contained in the sameness of underlying mental substance (or consciousness—*cogito*: I think therefore I am/exist). Locke recognizes personal identity (or unity of consciousness) as present in (or due to) the memory of past actions. Whereas Descartes and Locke are both in a circular position, Hume considers personal identity as a fiction (like that of a nation or club or any organization, society, community, committee whose existence through time is not an all-or-nothing affair). Hume's contemporary disciple is obviously Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. 1991). The existentialist thinkers who prefix existence to essence suspect the identity of the single person at a time or through time—one can imagine oneself as having been or becoming different—one's brain changing either in its matter or in its function while it goes on thinking and experiencing. Franz Kafka's well known story "Metamorphosis" illustrates such a problem of personal identity.

With this philosophical background the issue of cultural identity appears to be much more critical than ever thought to be. Although nation and culture are not identical concepts they share a common relationship among language, territory and myth. From its Latin root *nationem* till date the conceptual dimension of the word nation has bewilderingly expanded, and the triadic criteria of a nation fail to define nations like India, Switzerland and Belgium. In India, where several nation-states enjoy or are identified by their linguistic independence/privilege one can think of their "subcultures" (rather than "culture") under a single banner of national culture—to follow the key distinction made by Geoffrey Hartman between a generality and a particular (*The Factual Question of Culture*, 1997), whereas Raymond Williams distinguishes between two generalities, the arts and the whole way of life. Whereas for Williams society still remained a generality or a commonality, for Hartman it has already become a multicultural plurality of particulars.

Viewing from all these points it is safe to understand Oriya culture as a sub-culture under the national culture of India—this sub-culture being identified by its linguistic territory that determines the consciousness of a group of people that speaks/uses Oriya language as the medium of verbal communication. Obviously, as already proposed by Bhartrhari, it is the language that constructs the experience of a people. Hence it is always the linguistic territory that should determine the geographical territory, although politics always forces the reversal of this truth as evident in the courses of history.

Now Behera traces the rise of Oriya (sub) culture during the latter Ganga Dynasty out of which Śāralādas emerges as the most important literary leader to convert the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* into an Oriya one. It is really remarkable, we wholesomely agree with Behera that culture is not an essence of a people, rather signifies the existence of a people. In its construction of the entire range of institutions, artifacts and (religion and others) practices culture defines a people in making up their symbolic universe. This is how Ernst Cassirer has defined man as *homo symbolicus*. In the literary works since Śāralā, the landscape of Orissa is experienced more in terms of its linguistic territory that determines its geography. Ignoring the existentialist rejection of any identity of a being, either a person or a community, judging either from inside or from outside, we agree with Behera that since Śāralā till the formation of the modern nation-state there has been a continuous construction of a (sub) culture that is called Oriya based on literary and religious practices, although simultaneously we must acknowledge the Kalinga-culture (not sub-culture) long before the Gangas, during the time of Aśoka identified by the bravery of its people. The proverbial Sanskrit expression "Kalinga Sāhasika" (Kalingas are courageous) cited by Visvanatha Kavirāja (later Ganga-14th century AD) as an illustration of *lakṣaṇa* is to be duly acknowledged. Military skill, patriotism are no less cultural values than the arts and religious activities. Behera's meticulous study omits two other cultural identities of Orissa—the pictorial and the sculptural. The omission might be due to various reasons. His approach to the centrality of Lord Jagannath is noteworthy. The deity has functioned both centrifugally and centripetally.

Apart from appreciating the great merit of the work accomplished by Behera, we consider his theoretical chapter rather poor in view of the immense growth of literature on the subject of nationalism and the location of culture and cultural identity. Although he rejects the essentialist view of culture or cultural identity (and rightly he does so) he believes in *essential* (cultural) attributes (p.1). Even if the word 'common' is used for 'essential', these common features are also relative changing in course of its growth and progress. Cohn's categorization of India into four regions such as historical, linguistic, cultural and socio-structural, as Behera refers to, is confusing and needs reconsideration. However, the first chapter might be revised in the second edition.

**Darius Cooper, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. XI + 260.**

I was introduced to Satyajit Ray's film world in 1963 by my friend Ajay Sengupta who also introduced me to Bengali literature. In a local cinema hall of Bhadrak my native place (now a district headquarters of Orissa) we visited the film *Teen Kanya* (1961) in a matinee show of Kailash Talkies adjacent to Bhadrak Railway Station. That was a significant event in my life which had directed my attention to aesthetic aspects of Indian cinema. Since then I had been a regular visitor to the pictures by a group of Bengali film directors who brought Copernican revolution in the cinema-culture of India rich in its aesthetic tradition that started as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. with Bharata. Along with Ray other film-makers who attracted my attention are Tapan Sinha, Ajay Kar, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Parthpratima Chaudhuri. The 1960s were the heyday of Bengali cinema, and it was during this time that coincidentally I became intimate with Bengali culture as a whole while pursuing my academic career at Jadavpur University. I remember how eagerly I was waiting for the release of Ray's film almost regularly during the Pūja (autumnal Durga festival) every year simultaneously in three cinema halls of Calcutta – my favourite hall being Prachi adjacent to the Sealdah Railway Station. Many of the Ray films till his *Nayak* were produced by R.D. Bansal. Ray's *Charulata* (1964) and Sinha's *Atithi* (Guest) were perhaps simultaneously released, both adopting Tagore's literary sensations of different forms. I might confidently comment that from aesthetic point of view both were on par. Notwithstanding Ray's distinction, Sinha has several times been aesthetically equal to Ray whereas Ghatak and Sen have been advocates of different modernist and anti-modernist Western intellectual movements. Ray and Sen have remained always bias free artists with their individual focuses on different aspects of social events in contemporary Bengal (Indian) – Ray on the realist aspects, Sinha on the moral one.

Starting from *Pather Panchali* to *Agantuk* (which has a distinct moral message) Ray has almost always remained a realist though vigorously exploiting his own symbolic vision of human life in both experiencing

and expressing characters, emotions, relationship with a quest for meaning of human life itself. But Ray has never been an absurdist. He (Sinha as well) believes in both Aristotle and Bharata – in the significance of plot and expression of emotion in the drama (cinema). Therefore, instead of texturing any story by himself, he has always adopted the powerful plots woven by the most successful Bengali novelists and story writers such as Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Sunil Gangopadhyay and Sankar. He started the revolution with Bibhuti Bandopadhyay's *Apu Trilogy*, and earned the Gold Bear for the same author's *Ashani Sanket*. Similarly, outside Bengali literature he chooses Prem Chand only (*Satranj Ke Khilari* and *Sadgati*) for his plot construction that suits his aim and ambition for depicting the fall of feudal luxury and the critics of castism. At the same time Ray is fully conscious of the Indian conception of drama and literature as phenomena or forms of artistic exercise that express *Rasa*. Therefore, Ray's camera focuses the faces of the characters signifying his strategy of generating *rasa* through the *sattvika abhinaya* mostly. Saumitra Chatterjee is not a handsome actor in comparison with Uttam Kumar. But Ray chooses Saumitra, particularly for his face that is gifted with *sattvika abhinaya* – among physical, linguistic, visual and mental, Ray emphasizes the last one. Of course the visual aspect of his films is extremely significant as is the auditory one. The sight of a train in *Pather Panchali* and the rattling of the train at midnight in *Kapurus* are equally important for generating the desired *rasas*.

In the book under review Cooper writes five chapters on Ray's films each chapter focusing on a distinct aspect of a group of films: the first chapter on *rasa* in *Apu trilogy* and *Jalsaghar*, the second on the issue of problems of the Hindu (Bengali) woman in *Charulata*, *Ghare Baire*, *Teen Kanya*, the third on the crisis of man in contemporary India (Bengal), the fourth on the colonial issues in *Satranj Ke Khilari* which he understands as Ray's political vision of the doubly colonized. In the final chapter Cooper highlights the linguistic aspects of Ray's film – the language of *Bhadralok* culture. The ironic perspective of this aspect of Ray is that he uses this language to censure this language. One cannot forget the irony of character's dialogue with Amal – "Dada, Kulpi Khaba?" (Brother, would you like to taste Kulpi [a kind of ice-cream])? Perhaps there is no other language in which one can express a neglected woman's crave for a male's company as well as her expression of the repressed desire for intimacy.

Cooper's aim of this study is "to situate and evaluate the cinema of Satyajit Ray from an Indian aesthetics as well as an Indian social and historical perspective", and concludes with statements "Had Ray lived to make films after *Agantuk*, he may have confirmed to dismantle contemporary *Bhadralok* culture. His last three films shouted that he had made a new beginning in disrupting the "classical" in his own oeuvre and gradually replacing it with the "marginal" – proving that Ray was not completely out of step with contemporary India, as had unfairly been claimed". Cooper's study of Ray's filmic experience in different phases of his career is undoubtedly praiseworthy, particularly for his sincerity in placing Ray in contemporary critical idiom. Cooper is not anachronic in interpreting Ray's consciousness of such phenomena as political hegemony, feminism and colonialism in a period when these phenomena were not reflected in the critical vocabulary. But an error which strikingly appears is the question – is *rasa* generated only in the films that Cooper groups in his first chapter or in all other films as well? If *rasa* is generated, in all his films, which in fact is so, then why is he not focusing this aspect systematically? It is absolutely inappropriate to categorize Ray's films as Cooper does. It is never the fact that some films generate *rasa* whereas others deal with different social and political problems that do not generate *rasa*.

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**Richard Shusterman. *Surface and Depth: Dialectics of Criticism and Culture*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York: 2002. ISBN 0-8014-3828-4**

Richard Shusterman's new book is a collection of previously published essays that span the length of his philosophical career and the breadth of his research in aesthetics. Those unfamiliar with Shusterman's writings will encounter an engagingly lucid and forthright pragmatist. Those familiar with his writings might ask whether *Surface and Depth* provides any added value beyond proximity. It does so by clearly organizing the

ask whether *Surface and Depth* provides any added value beyond proximity. It does so by clearly organizing the theoretical oppositions upon which he has constructed his conception of art as *dramatization*. The different chapters of the book ground and sustain an argument that otherwise would be difficult to grasp in the form of disjointed journal publications.

The essays comprising *Surface and Depth* have been revised or rewritten for organization around the historical rift between the sensuous aesthetic surface and the search for deeper interpretive meaning. *Surface and Depth's* scope is considerable in that its three main sections ("Logics of Criticism," "Logics of Culture," and "Contemporary Reconstructions") consider the rift from the philosophical perspectives of analytic aesthetics, pragmatism, and continental philosophy. In some cases, such as the limited discussions of convention and surface property relevance, the broad range of analysis can be seen as a drawback because thorough understanding is scarified. This is less a criticism regarding the accomplishment of the book's objective than a statement of the desire for more. On this point, Shusterman does an effective job of directing the reader to further sources of information.

The book's first section, "Logics of Criticism," begins by charting the transition from the classical analytic philosopher's preoccupation with the immediacy of surface to the contemporary analytic philosopher's preoccupation with metaphysical. Shusterman allows us to see the internal conflicts which have marginalized analytic aesthetics within the overall practice of analytic philosophy. He also analyzes the tension between descriptive accuracy and critical reform, and between analytic and non-analytic logics of interpretation. In attempting to clarify and resolve these tensions Shusterman analyses the aesthetic theories of G.E. Moore, Beardsley, Danto, Dickie, Margolis, Dewey, Croce, Derrida, and Wittgenstein, among others. You will find compelling arguments concerning prescriptive, descriptive and performative logics of interpretive statements, the role of reasons in interpretation, and the nature and role of authorial intention. As Shusterman develops his argument for a pragmatic resolution of these tensions, it becomes clear that his thought is shaped primarily by Dewey and Wittgenstein. This section ends with an illuminating examination of the ways in which Wittgenstein changed analytic aesthetics.

The book's second section, "Logics of Culture," builds upon the conclusion of the first section, that the use and validity of one out of an acceptable plurality of interpretive logics is governed by what Shusterman calls the *principle of coherent comprehensiveness of understanding*; this principle encapsulates the pragmatic goals of an enhanced aesthetic experience and quality of life he presents in his book *Pragmatic Aesthetics*. In this section, the author analyzes the impact of culture on the schematization of thought. He begins with the distinction between *nature* and *culture*, arguing that the positions adopted by Hume and Kant contain an unrecognized cultural subtext whereby the natural uniformity of feeling resulting from universal taste or disinterestedness actually depends upon a culturally established consensus. The only argument in the book I find seriously flawed is that in which he argues in support of a socially privileging subtext in Kant's theory. The author then examines the concept of convention with respect to the *nature* vs. *culture* controversy, and the concept of culture as developed in the aesthetic theories of Alain Locke, Dewey, Eliot, and Adorno. Finally, Shusterman briefly analyzes the importance of the visual surface of Lewis Carroll's poem "Tale of a Mouse" and the poem "l(a)" by E.E. Cummings.

In the third section, "Contemporary Reconstructions," Shusterman presents his own formulation of pragmatism, *reconstructive-poetic pragmatism*. In doing so, he identifies the affinities with and differences between his account and those of Danto, Margolis, Rorty, Dewey, and Bourdieu. "[Reconstructive-poetic pragmatism] offers the strategies of genealogical narratives and new ways of talking that not only expose the questionable motives and sources of invariance but also contribute to new, variant linguistic practices that can improve our culture" (201). In this spirit Shusterman construes art, in a fallibilist and revisionist fashion, as *dramatization*, a vivid and intense experience that is socially contextualized or framed. The idea of art as *dramatization* integrates the aesthetic surface and the deep cultural framework by which meaning is constructed; he asks the reader to consider art as an integration of the different meanings of the phrases "to dramatise" and "to dramatize".

One weakness of *Surface and Depth* is that the pragmatic system Shusterman develops is not explicated through diverse practical application; his only two examples focus on literary art. Although he does develop a more extensive application of his pragmatism, with regard to rap music, in his book *Performing Live*, application to the visual arts is needed. Overall, *Surface and Depth* would be an effective and provocative introduction to pragmatic aesthetics for advanced aesthetics students. It provides a deep understanding of pragmatically constructed relation between philosophy and art and will serve as a marker of the future development of pragmatic aesthetics.

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